Zhao Villagers - everyday practices in a post-reform Chinese village

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For my mother, Akiko and Azita

Abstract

This thesis has two aims. Firstly, it aims to provide a detailed ethnographic account of a post-reform village in north-western China by approach of examining how the fields of social relations are formed by and through discursive representations of the village and how the formation of social relations and representations of the village are constituted in everyday practices. Secondly, this thesis also aims to reach wider theoretical issues, particularly issues concerning the debates about writing and fieldwork in contemporary anthropology, and aims to use a specific case study to raise, critically, questions about ethnographic writing on China. Writing in the wake of Foucauldian and renewed Marxist currents of radical critique from which comes the general claim of relating power to knowledge or to ideology, I take a 'practice approach' in this thesis to examine rural life in post-reform China as historically situated social practice. Focusing on the details of everyday life, I argue that, firstly, social action and its agents are mutually constitutive and, secondly, social, economic and political organisations as complex forms of practices are constituted in everyday practices.

In the Introduction, I trace the regional tradition of ethnographic writing on China and illustrate my theoretical stance and the specific position from which I write. Chapter 1 provides a background of the village by way of presenting different narratives and representations about the village. Chapter 2 looks at kinship as a social practice and examines its changing strategies. Chapter 3 focuses on the tactics of marriage negotiation and shows that social relations are modifiable, alterable, changing processes. Chapter 4 looks at food and the way in which it is served on different occasions as a signifier of various kinds of social relationships. Chapter 5, as a core chapter of the thesis, examines the strategies and tactics of everyday practices through a series of detailed ethnographic examples. Chapter 6 looks at the village celebrations - weddings and funerals - as extensive forms of practices, which reveal more clearly 'the logic of practice' in post-reform rural China. Chapter 7, the last substantial chapter, focuses on the effects of the economic reforms on the village's economic and political practices, and shows the changing strategies in re-ordering and re-constituting the power relations in post-reform rural China. In my Conclusion, I point out the significance of my research as a critical understanding of both the actual socio-economic conditions of post-reform rural China and the regional tradition of ethnographic writing on China.

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Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the villagers in Zhaojiahe, whose help and understanding are crucial to my fieldwork and writing. In particular, I would like to thank Zhao Xicang and my three hosts in the village. The villagers' names in this thesis are spelled according to *pu-tong-hua* pronunciation, which in many cases differ from their local sounds. In this way, I have tried to avoid putting down the real characters of the people, from some of whom I did not ask permission to use their true names.

Among academic help and assistance, I am tremendously grateful to my supervisors, Mark Hobart and Elisabeth Croll. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Stephan Feuchtwang, Aihwa Ong, Donald Nonini, Stuart Thompson, Paul Rabinow, Mayfair M. Yang, Christina S. Blanc - among others - for their advice and support in different ways. I also thank Sangjik Rhee, Zhang Huabing, Ulla Munch Jörgensen, Aamer Hussein, Lisa Hoffman for their friendship and help during more than four years of my research and writing.

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Illustrations

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Table for conversion of Chinese units of measurement

Length
1 *li* = 0.5 kilometer
1 *chi* = 0.333 meter

Area
1 *mu* = 0.077 hectare
1 *li* = 0.01 *mu* = 0.1 *fen*

Weight
1 *dan* = 50 kilograms
1 *jin* = 0.5 kilogram

Official Exchange Rates, Pounds and Chinese Yuan

1980 1 pound = 3.5 *yuan*
1983 1 pound = 3.0 *yuan*
1985 1 pound = 3.8 *yuan*
1987 1 pound = 6.1 *yuan*
1989 1 pound = 6.2 *yuan*
1990 1 pound = 8.5 *yuan*
1991 1 pound = 9.4 *yuan*

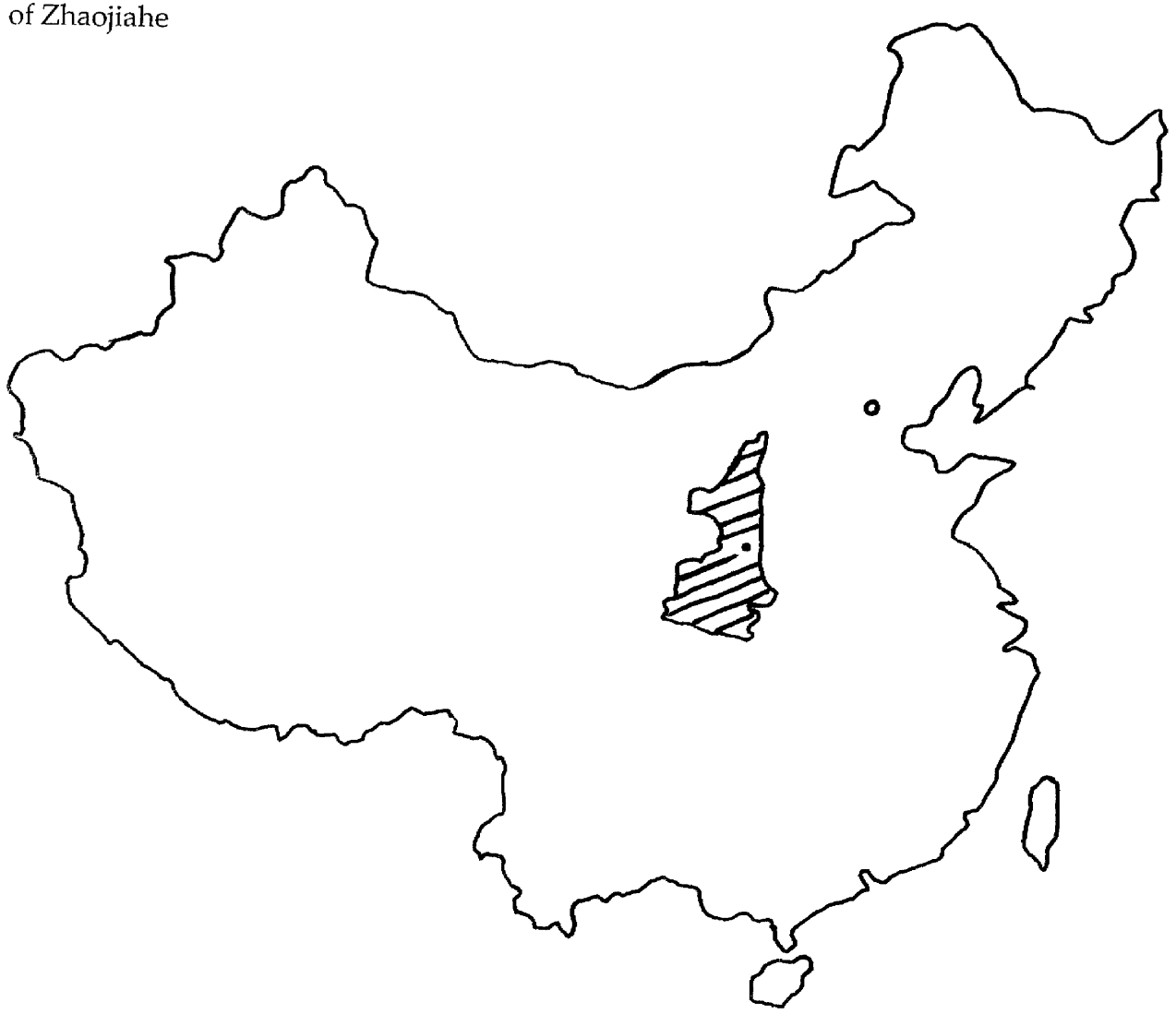
Romanization

Most names and words are written in Mandarin, romanized according to the pinyin system, except for a few crucial terms in the local dialect which have been spelled according to the original sounds.

Whatever else the universities may do, they must produce intellectual pleasure.

------ Maurice Freedman

Map 1. Location of Zhaojiahe



•: Zhaojiahe
o : Beijing
▨ : Shaanxi Province

Introduction

Ethnographers are more and more like the Gree hunter who (the story goes) came to Montreal to testify in court concerning the fate of his hunting lands in the new James Bay hydroelectric scheme. He would describe his way of life. But when administered the oath he hesitated: "I'm not sure I can tell the truth.... I can only tell what I know."

James Clifford - 'Partial Truth'

The Predicament of Ethnography

Like the Gree hunter in the Montreal court, most - if not all - anthropologists would feel unease and hesitate, in the past few decades, if required to undergo the oath with regard to their own writings about other people, not only because they have gradually become aware of the partiality of the truth, of possible dangers of imposing one's own interpretation of another on another by means of writing, but also because they have started to be conscious of the socio-political contexts in which their writings emerged. That is, in the trend of post-structuralist or, if some prefer, postmodernist style of thinking, anthropologists have started to see how power relations and anthropological knowledge are mutually constitutive. Ethnography as a special kind of knowledge insinuates and reinforces the power relations which provide conditions for such knowledge. This awareness of how anthropological knowledge is historically constituted as and in power relations is the context in which my ethnographic research is set to start.

In this introduction, I will first briefly review recent criticisms of ethnographic authority and writing, and then, using the implications derived from my discussion of the criticism, move to examine monograph writing on China (including Taiwan and Hong Kong), to explore, in Fardon's terms, a 'localizing strategy'. This discussion of the new ethnographic criticism and monograph writing on China aims to provide a background through which my own ethnography of a post-reform Chinese village can be situated. In the following section, I will introduce how I chose my fieldwork site, a village in north-western China, and discuss my own position from which I write. Finally I shall turn to an outline of my theoretical orientation, main arguments and the structure of the thesis.

* * *

Until fairly recently, anthropologists by and large comfortably - if not too comfortably - 'sat on a mat' of "a trinity of elements: fieldwork, shorthand for participant observation, theoretical argument and monograph writing" (Fardon 1990: 1). If there is anything essential to anthropology since Malinowski returned from the Trobriand Islands in the 1920s (in America, the parallel was Boas) with volumes of notes, it is less the discipline's theoretical orientations than its method - the modern, professional, scientific mode of intensive fieldwork, namely the

ethnography.[1] Malinowski announced, in the Argonauts of the Western Pacific, a victory of scientific ethnography over 'distorted' presentations (i.e. by missionaries, colonial officials, travellers and so forth) of the native and claimed that science had 'killed' the false representations of other cultures (Malinowski [1922] 1961: 11; cf. Pratt 1986: 25). Since then, although theoretical orientations of the anthropological discourse have often been in variation and modification, the methodological aspect of anthropology, that is, its intensive fieldwork, has remained as an anchor to secure the safety of the discipline. As Fernandez said, "We anthropologists may often decry the fact that we make a fetish of fieldwork, yet in almost every case it is the rich data of a fulfilled field experience which is the matrix of significant accomplishment in our discipline" (1975: 191, quoted in Fardon 1990: 2).

In the past few decades, this powerful new scientific, as well as literary, genre, the ethnography, a synthetic cultural description based on participant observation, has responded to the fast changing world order (i.e. the post-colonial) which in turn poses and imposes various crucial questions concerning the problem of representation of the Other for a diversity of disciplines. As Clifford puts it, "Ethnography is an emergent interdisciplinary phenomenon. Its authority and rhetoric have spread to many fields where 'culture' is a newly problematic object of description and critique" (1986: 3). More clearly still, Marcus points out:

> At the present moment, anthropology both attracts and repels those caught by the spirit of experimentation in a diversity of fields. It is ethnography that primarily attracts. We find philosophers, literary critics, historians, and political economists reading ethnographies of the Balinese and Azande, not out of intrinsic interest in the subject matter, but for their distinctive textual devices and modes of exploring theoretical issues in the process of ethnographic representation itself (1986a: 167, footnote 4).

The consciousness of ethnographic representation as 'distinctive textual devices and modes of exploring theoretical issues' comes along with the consciousness of its limitations and historical biases. The 'new ethnographic criticism' thus emerged in response to a historical moment in ethnographic writing. With respect to its historical biases, that is, the condition under which ethnographic writing in particular and anthropological discourse in general emerged, there is the political economy of a changing globe. The relationship between anthropology and this political economy is by now well recognised, as is elegantly summed up by Fardon:

> ... from writers in the wake of Foucauldian and renewed Marxist currents of radical critique have come observations on the general association which they claim always relate power to knowledge or to ideology. Their message, by now well known, was not that anthropology was simply a child of colonialism, in that colonization provided the political and economic contexts for anthropological fieldwork as well as making it practically feasible, nor that anthropology sometimes subserved the aims of colonialism directly by furnishing information or advice, rather ethnography was colonialism's twin. The political and economic relations were the conditions for others to be construed in specific terms and as particular types of objects of knowledge (1990: 6).

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[1] Although Malinowski is often taken as the exemplary figure of modern scientific ethnography (see, for instance, Clifford 1988; Fardon 1990), the idea for 'intensive fieldwork' had existed before Malinowski's trip to the Trobriand Islands, see Kuper 1983: esp. 6-8, 193. For a discussion of 'Malinowskian myth', see Stocking 1983: esp. 104-12.

However, the 'new ethnographic criticism' goes further and runs into details to explore the presuppositions and propositions of 'colonialism's twin'. This both enriches and endangers the discipline's anchor. In an influential essay, James Clifford, who "has created and occupied the role of ex officio scribe of our scribblings" (Rabinow 1986: 242), summarises characteristics of, so to speak, the Malinowskian type of ethnography into six main points:

First, according to Clifford, since the 1920s, both publicly and professionally, "the persona of the fieldworker was validated" (1988b: 30). Malinowski, Mead, Marcel Griaule and so forth made ethnography both scientific and heroic. "The professional ethnographer was trained in the latest analytic techniques and modes of scientific explanation" (1988b: 30). Amateur ethnographers were denied by, partially at least, establishments of a series of normative standards for the professional, including, for instance, living in a native village, using the vernacular, staying for a sufficient length of time, etc.

Second, the new style fieldworker, who was supposed to spend a significant length of time in the field, usually no more than two years, was supposed to manage to 'use' efficiently - rather than 'master' - the native tongue. To what extent the ethnographer should manage the native tongue was a matter of dispute among leading anthropologists (1988b: 30-31). However, in general, a certain degree of linguistic competence was required in order for the ethnographer to avoid totally dependent on 'privileged informants'.

Third, as the term 'participant observation' suggests, "an increased emphasis was given to the power of observation" (1988b: 31) since the 1920s. The ethnographer became a trained onlooker who 'saw' other cultures behave, perform and communicate. A significance was given to the visual: "interpretation was tied to description" (1986b: 31). This gave a privilege to the ethnographer as observer over the interpreter of the indigenous informants (authority).

Fourth, certain theoretical frameworks, Radcliffe-Brown's model of social structure, for instance, were given to the professional ethnographer in order to help to penetrate the native culture quickly. The 'complex whole' (the famous Tylor definition of culture) of another culture was thus able to be understood by adopting a short-cut. The question of which parts best represented the whole was not discussed in detail.

Fifth, since it may appear to be too complex for the ethnographer to grasp the 'complex whole' within a short period of time, the professional ethnographer "intended to focus thematically on particular institutions" (1988b: 31). Underlying this there is an assumption that the whole is on analogy of the parts. In other words, a description of 'ritual ceremonies' of another culture may serve as a understanding of that culture.

Sixth, the ethnographic writing established this way was doomed to be synchronic. The ethnographer was set to explore the 'ethnographic present' rather than history. The historical perspective disappeared in the emergence of the profession of ethnographic writing.[2]

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[2]J. Boon summarised the characteristics of ethnography of this kind: "Fieldwork is a peculiar idea: a prolonged episode, ideally (since Malinowski), during which a lone researcher visits a remote population. The experience, not quite authentic when an entire expedition pursues it, must be hauntingly personal and richly particular; yet it becomes the basis for intercontinental comparisons. The prescribed method of

Underlying these characteristics outlined above, there are a few fundamental presuppositions embedded in so-called 'scientific ethnography', that is, the Malinowskian type. The core one, as Clifford among others discloses and deconstructs, is that 'participant observation' appeals to *experience* to act as validations for ethnographic authority. 'I-witness' or 'I was there' or 'out there' justify, legitimise and account for authentic explanation. It is not the ethnographer's writing, but his experience with the native, that gives power to ethnography. That is the participation, the experience obtained in another alien world such as the Trobriand Islands, Samoa, Nuerland, Polynesia, that authorises ethnographic writing (e.g. Clifford 1988b: esp. 34-7; Geertz 1988: 1-24; Boon 1982: 4-9). Experience is made powerful, so that "theory is not determinant of ethnography, ... *because* it cannot determine the ethnographer's experience in the field" (Fardon 1990: 3, emphasis in the original). Underlying the stress given to experience, there is a premise of theoretical framing made by philosophers. Among others, Dilthey (1914) takes seriously the argument for the role of experience in the historical and cultural sciences, maintaining that a shared experience of co-existence in a 'common sphere' provides the necessary conditions for exegesis of cultural knowledge (cf. Clifford 1988b: 35-6).

An immediate corollary of this presupposition is that it assumes a transparent process of ethnographic representation, that is, experiences are supposed to be able to be transformed into monographs without any contamination of textual strategies. In other words, because 'I was there', the truth and facts are here, that is in monographs.

Monograph writing has been the means of sustaining this scientific, professional ethnography, which went hand in hand with the rise of functionalism. Boon went as far as to argue that monograph writing, "together with the fieldwork method, formed the heart of functionalism" (1982: 13). However, the question is: what is missing in this coherent set of both methodological and theoretical claims? It is short of certain chapters. As Boon argued, firstly, since cultures are assumed by functionalists to be 'islandlike, space-time isolates of interlocking, reinforcing systems of relationships', the monograph tends to neglect relations between a particular culture and others. That is, inter-relations give way to intra-relations. Second, since the stress is given to the systems of relations of an 'islandlike' culture, it tends to ignore "the history of the tendency to conceptualize the population as a 'culture' and on the ultimate fact of fieldwork: the significance of a stranger's inserting himself into the routine context of a face-to-face population" (Boon 1982: 15). As a genre, in monograph writing, "the author as fieldworker was always implicitly present; the author as author was usually implicitly absent - a standard convention of realist fiction" (Boon 1982: 14).

This functionalist stance in the anthropological discourse has come under criticism by 'hermeneutically sophisticated anthropologists' in the past two decades (e.g. Geertz 1973, 1976; Rabinow and Sullivan 1979; Sperber 1985). As Clifford wrote:

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fieldwork requires being there, participating and observing, and speaking the language. The ideal-type anthropologist (each individual anthropologist, of course, need not conform) clarifies - literally as a pedestrian - the highest-flying issues in human meaning: Icarus with dirty feet" (1982: 5).

> Interpretation, based on a philosophical model of textual 'reading', has emerged as a sophisticated alternative to the now apparently naive claims for experiential authority. Interpretive anthropology demystifies much of what had previously passed unexamined in the construction of ethnographic narratives, types, observations, and descriptions. It contributes to an increasing visibility of the creative (and in a broad sense poetic) process by which 'cultural' objects are invented and treated as meaningful (1988b: 38).

Although it rightly exposes a textual dimension to ethnographic writing, interpretive anthropology, which derives its philosophical premises from Paul Ricoeur (1973), seems to suffer the same symptom as what it attacks with respect to the problem of objectivity, according to Clifford (1988b: 41). It has been argued that culture is invented (Wagner 1980) and the anthropology's object is made (Fabian 1983). To trace the propositions embedded in ethnographic writing is one way to help us understand this process of 'invention' and 'making'.

* * *

The assumption of transparency in ethnographic writing invokes the parallel between participant observation and laboratory observation, that is, the mode of ethnographic writing and that of scientific description. Two questions then emerge. One concerns what is often called 'the subjective position' which the ethnographer takes in relation to her or his object of study, either in terms of another culture or in terms of another people. The other concerns the problem of representation itself, which is more philosophical in nature. Let us take these two problems in turn briefly.

As Stocking showed, the rhetorical problem that Malinowski confronted in Argonauts of the Western Pacific was to convince his readers that what he was bringing to them were facts objectively acquired, not subjective descriptions (1983: esp. 105; see also Clifford 1988c). The best illustration of Malinowski's position comes from Firth's declaration. In We, the Tikopia, first published in 1936, Firth, by means of offering allegedly objective and detailed descriptions of social customs, 'marshalled with Dickensian exuberance and Conradian fatality' as Geertz commented, tried to leave as little space as possible for a subjective interpretation. As Firth wrote towards the end of his book, "The greatest need in the social sciences to-day is for a more refined methodology, as *objective* and *dispassionate* as possible, in which, while the assumptions due to the conditioning and personal interest of the investigator must influence his findings, that bias shall be consciously faced, the possibility of other initial assumptions be realized and allowance be made for the implications of each in the course of analysis" (1936: 488; emphasis added, cited in Geertz 1988: 13). The native or the Other is meant to be objectified, like the object of science, as a pure subject of study and any possibility of subjective interpretation is alleged to have been completely eliminated. Or, in Firth's term, 'as objective and dispassionate as possible'.

In the case of Firth, the subjective position of the ethnographer is objectified in order to bring forward 'scientific knowledge' of the Other. This premise that 'scientific knowledge' is determined by objective description has been challenged and rejected by the later generations of anthropologists who have grown up in a post-colonial world order. For instance, to make a comparison with Firth's stance, Geertz offered an example of a more recent ethnographer,

Danforth, who wrote in the wake of criticism of the colonial attitude in dealing with the Other. In his study of the death ritual of rural Greece, Danforth tried to stress the point that one had to understand the Other from the Other's point of view, claiming that portraying the Other as primitive, bizarre and exotic constitutes "a major obstacle to a meaningful understanding of the Other, an obstacle that can only be overcome through some form of participation in the world of the Other". Therefore, Danforth tried to anticipate, participate and imagine how a native would have felt by relating their experiences of death to his own (1982: 5-7; see also Geertz 14-16). That is to say, Danforth was conscious of the bias of the alleged objectification and tried to break it down by rendering a subjectivity to the Other. In the case of Danforth, the ethnographer is said to be in relation with the Other by way of appealing to his own understanding of similar experiences.

The difference between Firth and Danforth can be in a way understood as the difference between what were respectively called 'abstract objectivism' and 'individualistic subjectivism' by Volosinov when he was dealing with the two main trends of thought in the philosophy of language (1973: 48-63). According to Volosinov, 'abstract objectivism', represented by de Saussure, takes language as an abstract system objectively proposed and leaves no room for any interpretation of subjective meaning; while, on the other hand, 'individualistic subjectivism', represented by von Humboldt, stresses the subjective creativity of individual usage and ignores the significance of the context of interrelations of actual acts of speaking. To follow Volosinov's terminology, Firth (Malinowski as well) proposed a model of 'abstract objectivism', while Danforth is close to that of 'individualistic subjectivism' in his premises. For Danforth, under the influence of cultural relativism, the Other is allowed a subjectivity and, in order to reach it, the ethnographer has to try to *understand* the Other by way of appealing to his own experience.

The similarity between Firth and Danforth lies both in accepting a subjective : objective dichotomy and in their mutual presupposition that reduces the very process of ethnographic writing simply to a transparent transcription. For both of them, when discussing the ethnographer's subjective position to the Other, it is only concerned with the ethnographer's *actual* relation to the people he studies. That is, how the Other should be presented, for instance, either objectively or subjectively. However, the way in which ethnographic writing is always constructed under specific historical conditions is left unquestioned. In other words, for both of them, there is a presupposed, crude realist attitude in their approach, which, by means of seeking either objective truth or subjective interpretation, excludes the possibility of questioning the way in which representation of the Other is carried out. Both Firth and Danforth are trying to provide a piece of ethnographic writing for readers, as Geertz rightly pointed out, to 'look through' rather than 'look at'. That is, no matter what kind of positions the ethnographer claims, either that of 'abstract objectivism' or that of 'individualistic subjectivism', ethnographic writing in these two cases is assumed to be transparent, as purely a means of presentation.

In respect to the problem of the ethnographer's subjective position towards his object of study, the 'field' epistemologically demarcates two sides. Anthropologists and the object of

anthropological study - the people whom the ethnographer encounters - are therefore assumed to be separated entities. As Geertz wrote, "that its subjects and its audience were not only separable but morally disconnected, that the first were to be described but not addressed, the second informed but not implicated" (1988: 132). This demarcation may bring about dangerous consequences since it promotes cultural hegemony of one kind or another. For instance, as Hobart argued recently, in the case of Bali, some authors (Geertz himself, for instance), by imposing their own subjectivity on the Balinese, portray Balinese as passive subjects who therefore have no capacity to reflect on their own action (1994).

By means of exposing a literary dimension to ethnographic writing (Marcus 1986b: 262), what the new ethnographic critics have brought into the discipline's consciousness, if not entirely innovative, is its own subjective position. That is, no matter what kind of claims the ethnographer makes, his or her subjective position is historically situated. In order to reveal the ethnographer's subjectivity, as the new ethnographic critics have showed, one has to be conscious of the textual strategies of ethnographic writing. If subjectivities and objectivities are necessarily historically situated in their writing, then the attempt to dichotomise the subjective and objective may be fundamentally misplaced.

In more general terms, it is then necessary to raise the question of representation. In an influential essay, Rabinow (1986) outlined Rorty's view on representation as a historical invention, Hacking's emphasis on truth as historically conditioned and Foucault's radical idea that the processes of representation or justification of truth constitute (as well as are constituted by) public and social practice. For Rorty, "the desire for a theory of knowledge is a desire for constraint - a desire to find 'foundations' to which one might cling, frameworks beyond which one must not stray, objects which impose themselves, representations which cannot be gainsaid" (Rorty 1979: 315; cited in Rabinow 1986: 234). Representation historically emerged as a means for western philosophers to gain the "triumph of the quest for certainty over the quest for reason" (Rorty 1979: 61). Therefore, it was necessary to establish a separation between external reality and internal representation, that is, the world and the mind. Knowledge then became epistemological, i.e. representational. As Rorty writes, "To know is to represent accurately what is outside the mind; so to understand the possibility and nature of knowledge is to understand the way in which the mind is able to construct such representations. Philosophy's eternal concern is to be a general theory of representations, a theory which will divide culture up into areas which represent reality well, those which represent it less well, and those which do not represent it at all (despite their pretense of doing so)" (Rorty 1979: 3; cited in Rabinow 1986: 235).

The early Hacking (1982) radicalises Rorty's position - to expose the fact that there are always historical conditions under which a truth is vitalised. However, the later Hacking (1990) is much closer to Foucault who turns our attention not only to historical conditions but also to the constitution of representations and discourses of truth as public and social practices. Foucault's stance is by now well known. Whether in his early works on madness and the birth of the clinic, or in his later works on prisons or genealogies of power, Foucault always treated thought as public practices which create, and recreate, conditions of historically situated

knowledge and power. As Rabinow said, "in The Order of Things (1973) and later works, Foucault demonstrates how the problem of correct representations has informed a multitude of social domains and practices, ranging from disputes in botany to proposals for prison reform. The problem of representations for Foucault is not, therefore, one that happened to pop up in philosophy and dominate thinking there for three hundred years. It is linked to the wide range of disparate, but interrelated, social and political practices that constitute the modern world, with its distinctive concerns with order, truth, and the subject" (1986: 239-40). Therefore, argued Rabinow, representations are social facts. Social facts are historically situated practices. Taking the approach Rabinow presented, it is very clear that ethnographic writing has a history and to expose its history is necessary for an understanding of what its authors write about.

* * *

What, then, is the prescription given by the new ethnographic critics to address the symptoms of experiential and interpretive ethnographic writing, which gives full control of the text to the anthropologist? Clifford's remedy is, following Bakhtin's analysis of epics and novels, to bring a dialogic dimension of fieldwork to anthropology. That is - to use Bakhtin's terminology - to let the 'polyphonist' bring out the 'heteroglossia' of different subjects. Bakhtin's model of language, which is starkly opposed to that of de Saussure, assumes that language is like a dialogue always socially and discursively situated at a particular moment (see Volosinov 1973). I shall return to Bakhtin later when I discuss the issue of everyday practice in relation to Bourdieu's idea of 'habitus'. A more fundamentally literary approach, which aims at a radical deconstruction of ethnographic writing, is taken by Tyler who "goes on to pronounce ethnography 'an occult document ... an enigmatic, paradoxical, and esoteric conjunction of reality and fantasy ... a fantasy reality of a reality fantasy'" (Geertz 1988: 137; see also Tyler 1986; Fardon 1990: 18).

Criticism of James Clifford's criticism of ethnographic writing takes the approach that Clifford takes to criticise ethnographic authority (see, for instance, Fardon 1990: 12-3, 23). For example, Rabinow argues that Clifford's effort of trying to establish a kind of dialogic fieldwork embeds in itself a progressive, if not too explicitly decisionist, monologic mode (1986: 245-7). Fardon also attacks the new ethnographic criticism by pointing to its propositions. As he writes:

> Ethnographic accounts are pervasively cross-referenced, both explicitly and implicitly, to accounts both within and outside conventionalized regions of inquiry. It is a major oversight of the new critics to have devoted little attention to the phenomenon. This neglect is the obverse side of their tendency to essentialize anthropology as the study of the 'Other', which in turn reinforces the myth of an autonomous, cerebrating western subject who creates others on paper by means of experience, that, in turn, is assumed to be both transparent and outside history (1990: 22).

While such criticism of criticism of criticism of ethnographic writing is still in process, the insights of Fardon's work (as well as other contributors to his collection, esp. Strathern, Parkin, Hobart, Kapferer) is important: in order to deconstruct the 'autonomous, cerebrating

western subject', what we need to look for is rather - just as the title of the book reveals - 'localizing strategies - the regional traditions of ethnographic writing'. A very important implication is that representations are not only *historically specific* but also *specifically historical*. They are regionalizing and localizing forces, historically situated in specific areas as specific strategies. The paradox however remains: if a barber claims that he cuts hair only for those who do not cut their own hair, should he cut his own hair? Does Clifford's assertion apply to Clifford himself? Returning to Clifford's message quoted in the beginning of this chapter, should we claim that the partial truth is the only absolute truth?

Monograph Writing on China as an Ethnographic Field

> What do functionalists do? - they write too. And what do they write? - monographs.
>
> James Boon[3]

Let us take the whole of China, including Taiwan and Hong Kong, as an ethnographic field and have a look at the styles of monograph writing in order to outline the broad historical development of a regional tradition of ethnographic writing. With respect to the field of China, I shall focus upon two types of authors, that is, two kinds of anthropologists: Western (European/American) anthropologists and Chinese anthropologists trained in the west. First, in relation to our previous discussion of 'ethnographic authority', I would like to examine how the native anthropologists define and choose the field, and then discuss the problem of subjectivity proposed by the native anthropologists. Meanwhile, I shall also sketch out the shifts, which have been affected by the changing order of the actual political forces in the area, in emphasis both in respect to accessibility of particular locations of the field and themes of research interest.

In a very limited space I will not be able to exhaust ethnographic examples of Chinese studies but, rather, use a limited set of instances to illustrate my points and sketch out the broad development of ethnographic writing on China. My choice of examples may then appear to be selective but my argument will not be affected by the limited examples that I produce in this discussion.

By focusing on anthropological (sociological) investigation of Chinese society, I have set aside numerous alternative accounts about - as often alleged - *the* Chinese life made by European missionaries and travellers, which include some of the earliest documentation of China tracing back to the thirteenth century, such as Guglielmo di Soragna's record of the experience of an Italian Franciscan, Odoric of Pordenone, Marco Polo's famous book Travels *(Il Milione)*, Ibn Battuta's travel notes (see Gernet 1982: 374-376). However, although the western influence in the domain of science and technology had been apparent for a while, not until the turn of this century did translations of western philosophical and sociological works seriously emerge in China (Gernet 1982: 596-597; Wong 1979: 2-4). In the sociological tide of translation,

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[3]Quoted in Fardon 1990: 9. Originally in Boon, 1983, 'Functionalists write too: Frazer/Malinowski and the semiotics of the monograph' in Semiotics 46 (2-4): 131-49.

Yen Fu played a dominant role and his translation of T. H. Huxley's Evolution and Ethics in 1898 indicated an emerging interest in western ideas of sociology (Gernet 1982: 646-647). Yen Fu also introduced works of H. Spencer ('The Study of Sociology'), Adam Smith ('The Wealth of Nations'), John Stuart Mill ('On Liberty') , Montesquieu *(L'Esprit des lois)* into China in the first decade of this century. As Gernet rightly pointed out, "this interest of Yen Fu and his contemporaries in Darwinian evolution and Anglo-Saxon sociology had in fact a political motive behind it" (1982: 647). This motive is inseparable from the political context of humiliation and disarray which characterised the whole period of the late Qing Dynasty, particularly after 1842 when, after the defeat in the first Opium War, the Treaty of Nanking was signed.

By attacking the allegedly inert nature of 'the Orient', Said showed how the image of the Orient was created in the context of colonial expansion, and claimed that "ideas, cultures, and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without their force, or more precisely their configurations of power, also being studied" (1978: 5). "Orientalism is a style of thought", as Said argued, "based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (1978: 2). That is, orientalism constitutes a power relation rather than simply myths. However, in order to reveal the tension of this power relation, one needs to examine not only macro-political forces but also the cultural institutions within which power insinuates itself. From this point of view, a sketch of monograph writing on China will help us understand the political context from which monograph writing arises.

Western sociology was institutionalised in China in 1910-1930 through courses taught mainly in American Christian schools (Wong 1979: 11-13). As Freedman observed, there was an early affinity between sociology and anthropology in the sphere of Chinese social science. Soon after the idea of the western social science came to China, anthropological investigation in the name of ethnology *(min-su-xue)* turned its attention to the non-Han people, those often termed in China as *shao-shu-min-zu* (literally, 'minorities') (Wong 1979: 78). A retrospection of the personal experience of the well known Chinese anthropologist (sociologist) Fei Xiaotong may help us trace the early development of anthropology (sociology) in China.[4] Commenting on his own experience, Fei, as a native anthropologist (sociologist) who experienced the affinity as well as 'authored'[5] some of its discourses, said:

> As a student and as a teacher, I always had some relations with sociology. In fact, some friends and I had smuggled in something else under the name of sociology. How to call these we were not sure. They include investigations of minority groups, rural villages, towns and factories. In the eyes of orthodox American and British sociologists, such studies would normally be regarded as outside their discipline. If we must insist on an academic label, they were similar to what was known in America and Britain as social anthropology, or what we now call ethnology. But at that time, anthropology and ethnology were not regarded as respectable academic labels, so very often they had to take shelter in the department of sociology (1975: 2, quoted in Wong 1979: 79).

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[4]For a brief discussion of Fei's personal involvement with sociology and anthropology, see his own account, 1988: 1-8. For a lengthy, more elaborate discussion of Fei's career and his role in the development of the Chinese anthropology and sociology, see Arkush 1981: esp. 22-103.

[5]The term is used in a Foucauldian sense, see Foucault 'What is an author?' in J. V. Harari (ed.) 1979; see also Geertz 1988: esp. 1-34.

When Fei went to study in Beijing, there were only departments of sociology or studies of ethnology which focused upon minorities. The allure for Fei of turning to anthropology, following his switch from medical studies to sociology, was the method that anthropologists promoted - ethnographic research (Fei 1988: 2-3). From medical school to sociology at Yenjing and then from library sources to ethnography, Fei switched his interests twice. These two switches are not simply personal, they rather indicate the concerns of the generation of intellectuals under that specific historical condition. Like Lu Xun, Fei gave up medical studies because he believed that doctors were only able to rescue the lives of a few individuals. For that generation of intellectuals such as Fei, it was believed that it was rather the nation who needed to be rescued. Therefore, underlying the first switch, there was the radical critique, overwhelmingly exemplified by the May Fourth Movement in 1919, of Chinese society and the Chinese 'traditional' social theories signified by Confucian and other schools. The second switch reflected the native intellectuals' dissatisfaction with the way in which the traditional Chinese scholars had discussed the problems of Chinese society. This way of thinking, which is often associated with Confucius, is philosophical rather than empirical (Fung 1948).

For Fei and his allies, anthropology appeared to be attractive because of its empirical nature, the ethnographic method, which allowed them to arm themselves with empiricism in order to argue against the tradition of Chinese philosophical thinking. However, the institutional arrangement of academia in China by then only led them to practise this new method restrictively on Chinese minority groups. In 1935, for instance, Fei went to study a people called the Yao in Guangxi Province where, in an accident, he lost his newly married wife Huitong Wang (Fei 1988: 3). For native anthropologists, ethnographic writing about Han people, that is, Chinese people in the strict sense, had to wait for another justification - for them to cross the ocean and to be trained in the west. Followed the institutionalisation of sociology, Chinese students were sent to the west to study the subject. It was then possible for the native anthropologists to write monographs on the Han people, Chinese villagers in particular. Again, Fei's personal experience is illuminating. In 1936, Fei came to London to follow the eminent Malinowski to study social anthropology. He was among the first students who were formally trained in the western social sciences (cf. Wong 1979). Under the supervision of Malinowski, a figure who was said to be like an oriental uncle to his students,[6] Fei removed to focus on Chinese villagers as the object of his ethnographic writing. By then, there emerged a style of monograph writing about Chinese villagers by native anthropologists in the manner approved by functionalists.

It is clear that the subject of study is historically constituted. For native anthropologists, the shift from minority studies to the studies of Han people raised the question about the definition of ethnographic field. In other words, where should one go and how could one define the field, if the ethnographic field is no more defined as the exotic communities along China's borderland? By redefining the object of study, the native

[6]See Kuper 1983: 21 and also Firth 1957: 157.

anthropologists had to justify their shift in focus by way of establishing a new set of both theoretical and empirical premises. One of the crucial issues involved is the choice of the field. If we think back to the mid-1930s, when Malinowski Seminars were bubbling and the 'scientific fieldwork' was booming, it is perhaps not surprising that native anthropologists turned to functionalism (or, more precisely, structural-functionalism) and chose the village as the unit of their studies.

Fei made it clear in his book Peasant Life in China (1939),[7] which had been his doctorate from the London School of Economics, that the village was an appropriate unit for intensive field research in China. With reference to Radcliffe-Brown and a Chinese scholar W. T. Wu, Raymond Firth, a teacher and a friend of Fei, was quoted to justify this claim: "To start with a single village as a centre, investigate the relationships of persons composing it, in terms of kinship, the distribution of authority, economic organisation, religious affiliation, and other social ties, and try to see how these relationships affect one another and determine the co-operative life of the small community. From this centre the investigation will radiate out following the personal relationships into other units in adjacent villages, economic linkage and social co-operation" (cited in Fei 1939: 7-8). This quotation indicates a general spirit favouring empirical research then in the academic circle of Beijing (see for instance Arkush 1981: 25-36; Wong 1979: 22-3).

Given the fact that China was often represented as a rural society, it should not be surprising for anthropologists to turn to its villages. However, Fei's conviction did not come from a notion of the importance of village life to an understanding of China, but rather derived from the very functionalist assumption that a village is small enough for an adequate observation of its social relationships. There are two underlying assumptions. First, it is a closed community in which functions of each part of the community can be *observed* in relation to the whole. Second, it is manageable to observe for a fieldworker who plans to stay only for a limited length of period (see Fei 1939: 7, esp. footnote 1). This position makes interesting assumptions about the significance of the ethnographer's experience and power of observation. It is necessary to point out that the native anthropologists, who appealed to - in Clifford's terms - 'experiential authority' by way of western functionalism, were actually reacting against their own tradition of non-empirical research (Arkush 1981: 27).

* * *

Functionalism and ethnographic research came hand in hand into the scene of Chinese sociology/anthropology. Monograph writing became inevitable. I shall outline the main shifts in (ethnographic) monograph writing about China and restrict my discussion to writings in English. Specifically, I intend to show shifts in emphasis in respect to the accessibility of particular locations in China and to themes of research interests in the context of tremendous socioeconomic change taking place in China in this century.

Let us first have a look at how the native anthropologists choose specific locations for carrying out their fieldwork. This raises the question of position from which the native

[7]Malinowski wrote a introduction to the book, highly praising the approach that Fei was taking.

anthropologists define their object of study, which, in turn, shows a specific attitude towards a specific subjectivity. For a long time, (this was the most common practice if not the only type) the native anthropologists often tended to return to their home villages (or towns) as fieldwork sites. That is, to go back to the place where they once lived or were brought up. For instance, as M. C. Yang, who studied in United States and was a roommate of Fei at Yenjing University, wrote: "The village of Taitou has been selected as the object of the first study because the writer was born and reared there, and lived there until he entered high school" (1945: ix). After listing a series of points of reasons for selecting Kaixiangong as his location of his village study, Fei asserted that being a native of Kaixiangong provided him 'special facilities', that is, linguistic advantage and the possibility to "penetrate into more intimate life without arousing suspicion" (Fei 1939: 25-6). Most Chinese of Fei and Yang's generation were brought up in villages, so it would not be surprising for them to return to the local settings which they were familiar with. Even today, to a great extent this practice remains. For instance, Wang Mingming, who recently received his PhD from SOAS, University of London (1993), studied festivals and folk culture in south China. Wang chose his home town, Quanzhou, where his family still live, as his fieldwork site. As he wrote, Quanzhou is "the city in which I grew up as a child and youth" (1993: 6) and "my family and my personal relations in Quanzhou gave me warm support during my fieldwork" (1993: 3). When arguing that there were different representations of festivals by different agents, he even returned to his memories - "This hypothesis is promoted by memories of my own childhood experience in Quanzhou" (1993: 6).

At first glance, it appears to be that it is the convenience, either linguistic or social, that provides the allure to native anthropologists returning to their home villages. However, historical contingencies are always made meaningful, in this case it involves a position from which the native anthropologists are able to claim a different type of subjectivity from that of western anthropologists. This different type of subjectivity is in turn used as means to justify a new type of objectivity. As M. C. Yang wrote, "and to make the picture real, through the eyes of a person who actually grew up in the community and experienced most of the social life described, the study is concluded with the story of a villager's boyhood. The writer feels justified in saying that the information given in this study is reliable and that the life picture thus presented is preserved in its wholeness so far as possible; he hopes that the rural community of Taitou will be culturally understood by the readers" (1945: xi). What is implied in this message is that a picture portrayed by a boy who has been brought up in this community is more 'real' and 'comprehensive' than one provided by an outside ethnographer. This new subjective position, claimed by the native anthropologists and significantly couched in dispassionate language the writer, 'he', and the use of the passive voice, is made to provide a 'more real' reality. The 'I-witness' is thus transformed into 'I-grow-up'. 'Being there' becomes 'brought up there'. For example, the picture that Fei showed to his readers (1939: 44-45) is neither like 'Stephen Tyler in the Field' on the cover of Writing Culture (Clifford and Marcus 1986) nor like 'Malinowski at writing' recently published by Stocking (1983: 101; cf. Clifford 1986: 1-2). The picture of Fei is titled 'The Author and Village Girls' in which the author is in a traditional Chinese dress, standing in a pose in which he makes extremely similar - even

humbler if not more carefully chosen - gesture to the way the village girls stand. To my mind, it says something similar to what Wang Mingming put on the front page of his dissertation - "To *My* People" (emphasis added).

To compare with what we have discussed about the characteristics of modern ethnography (the Malinowskian type) in the previous section, we can see that the native anthropologists followed the suit of their foreign counterparts. For instance, native anthropologists were trained in the British or American institutions as professional ethnographers; they stressed the importance of linguistic competence and power of observation; they were armed with certain theoretical frameworks, namely the functionalist or the structural-functionalist approach; and, finally, their research were intrinsically synchronic. The only different claim made by the native anthropologists derived not from how they intended to carry our their research but from *whom they were.* It is not what they intend to do but *who* does it that makes the native anthropologists a special subject. As for most native anthropologists, the logic is: they (we) are native, they (we) were brought up in the villages (or towns) which they (we) study, so they (we) are closer to truth than others. Although the emergence of ethnographic research in the early decades of this century in China was in itself a rebellion against the non-empirical tradition in Chinese philosophical thinking, the actual intensive fieldwork, in the way that Malinowskian functionalists understood it, were left abandoned. That is, the theoretical premises of ethnographic research was stressed on the one hand and, on the other, the actual 'being there' was replaced by 'once lived there' or 'brought up there'. Many native anthropologists stayed in the field for such a short period that it can hardly be called 'intensive fieldwork'. For examples, in the cases of Fei and M. C. Yang, for their first major work (1939 and 1945), the former's fieldwork only took two months, while the latter did not even bother to mention whether he had done any fieldwork apart from being brought up in his home village (Taitou) and paying frequent visits. This is to say, in a way, that native anthropologists adopted the theoretical position of empiricism but neglected it in practice.

The functionalist assumption and its methodological corollary - the parts resemble the whole - was the only element which was, if not completely missing, less stressed by native anthropologists in the early years. The native anthropologists in the early years did not focus on particular cultural institutions as means of penetrating the 'complex whole' but rather tended to provide holistic community studies. If there was one single set of institutions thematically focused upon by the early anthropological research on China, it was family and kinship, either taken as community studies (e.g. Kulp 1925; Fei 1939; M. C. Yang 1945; Lin 1947) or studies of descent principles (e.g. Hsu 1949; Hu 1948; Feng 1948; Lang 1948). It may be worth noticing that many early pieces of ethnographic writing on Chinese culture and society were made by the native anthropologists.

* * *

Not until the work of Maurice Freedman did the situation start to change. As Ebrey and Watson pointed out, some insights of Freedman's framework were borrowed from his colleagues who were Africanists, particularly, Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1986). I would like to draw

attention to the possible parallel between Evans-Pritchard's style of ethnographic writing and Freedman's way of theorising. Evans-Pritchard focused on the Nuer's political and social 'structures', analysed as an abstract set of 'relations between relations' such as territorial segments, lineages, age sets and other groups. In order to present his study of Nuer as an argument rather than a description, as Clifford pointed out, "Evans-Pritchard sharply distinguish his method from what he calls 'haphazard' (Malinowskian) documentation" (1988b: 32; cf. Geertz 1988). According to Evans-Pritchard, "facts can only be selected and arranged in the light of theory" (1969: 261). In the sense of allowing a powerful theoretical framework to organise ethnographic materials, Freedman's writing (he, unlike Evans-Pritchard, did little fieldwork himself) was in a way similar to that of Evans-Pritchard - ethnography as an argument. Following Ebrey and Watson's argument, Freedman created a new framework by which alternative investigations were possible (1986: 1-2). In my view, power of Freedman's framework lies in his overt effort to 'theorise' or 'paradigmatise' ethnographic materials. His theorisation relies upon thematic choices of specific cultural institutions - a premise derived from functionalism. By publishing two influential monographs, Lineage Organization in Southeastern China (1958) and Chinese Lineage and Society (1966), Freedman made a shift in which powerful theoretical considerations, thematically posed, took priorities by way of focusing upon specific cultural institutions.[8]

When Freedman was writing in 1950s to 1960s, mainland China had already undergone a tremendous political, historical and economic change. Mainland China has been in the hands of the communists since 1949 and the nationalists (Guomindang) went to Taiwan. China was in isolation from the west in the years when the followers of Freedman were eager to try the new approach and to explore his possible powerful theoretical insights. Taiwan and Hong Kong, the New Territories in particular, then became the centre of anthropological (i.e. ethnographic) investigation of Chinese society, to name a few among many influential monographs written during this period - Gallin 1966; Ahern 1973; Baker 1968, 1979; Cohen 1976; Pasternak 1972; Potter 1968; Feuchtwang 1974; J. Watson 1975; R. Watson 1985; Sangren 1987. Not only were most of the monographs written based upon fieldwork done in Taiwan and Hong Kong but also famous 'authors' of anthropological discussions of Chinese society shifted from the native to the Europeans and Americans, although some native anthropologists from Taiwan (e.g. Q. Chen 1984; Y. Chen 1985) and Hong Kong (e.g. D. Faure 1986, 1989) remained active participants.

With respect to anthropology, the mainland remained silent while undergoing dramatic social change (Wong 1979: 37-62). For reasons well-known, field studies in mainland China were not possible during the radical years of the Maoist period (i.e. from the 1950s to the late 1970s, see Croll 1994: 292). Despite the fact that more attention was given to an understanding of China's economic and political change by other disciplines, anthropologists from the west tried to represent the socioeconomic change and its influence on the society by turning to second-hand sources such as government documents, newspapers and periodicals

[8]A discussion of Freedman's approach will be given in Chapter 2 where I discuss kinship organisations in the village.

published in the mainland. For instance, the Marriage Law of 1950, issued by the communist government, and its consequences had been extensively examined by C. K. Yang (1959) and M. J. Meijer (1971), as well as serving as the starting point of Croll's influential monograph, The Politics of Marriage in Contemporary China, published in 1981. In Croll's study, for instance, apart from numerous quotations from magazines published and sponsored by the government, she made extensive reference to Chinese newspaper articles.

Just as accidents are meant to embody narrative significance in the Chinese story telling of historical events, inaccessibility to the field in the mainland was used to justify one kind of theoretical orientation. Under the subtitle of 'Anthropological Method', Croll wrote:

> However, it has been pointed out by both Skinner (1964: 50) and Freedman (1963: 4) that the confinement of attention to local community in Republican China was to miss the very characteristic of Chinese society which made it so interesting to anthropologists, that is, its scale and complexity. This is an even more appropriate comment on the People's Republic of China, where it can be argued that the State has intervened and played a more crucial role than ever before in uniformally changing social structures and integrating primary and informal groups into new and larger systems. *As this book illustrates, to have taken a small single unit of analysis, even if it had been methodologically possible, may have missed the very range of variables out of which the hypotheses put forward here have been derived* (1981: 10, my emphasis).

Croll admitted that there were shortcomings in taking a macroscopic approach but what is presupposed in her argument is that the actual scale of choice of a field is said to be determined by the kind of analysis theoretically posed. In this sense, there is a similarity between her view and that of Fei as well as his comrades, although Croll argued against Fei's attitude towards choosing a village as the appropriate fieldwork setting (1981: 10). In the case of China, as we have seen, one of the foci of discussion on ethnographic research is about the definition and choice of the field.

As we have seen earlier, the native anthropologists tried, on the one hand, to abandon the 'traditional' way of Chinese philosophical thinking which disfavoured empirical research and, on the other hand, used their native position to legitimise a form of fieldwork which is not ideally correspondent with what has been called 'modern, scientific ethnographic research' characteristic of 'intensive fieldwork'. The native anthropologists actually created two 'Others': one is the Other of a particular locale in China which constitutes their object of study and the other is the western Other from whom they borrow the theoretical framework and to whom they claim a superiority of being native over their counterparts. That is, on the one hand, native anthropologists used the western Other to claim that their knowledge of Chinese society, based on short trips to their home villages in many cases, is true since it is *empirical* and, on the other hand, they used their privileged position of being brought up in the places where they carried out their studies to argue that they know better about the society than the western Other does. What is missing is the intensive fieldwork itself. Although the native anthropologists might have had extensive experiences of staying in their home villages, fieldwork - in the way that Malinowski, Mead, Boas and Evans-Pritchard did - was never realised in the case of mainland China until very recently. My point is: for the early

native anthropologists, their advantage of being brought up in the villages they studied also prevents them from carrying out intensive fieldwork that they alleged to do. To put it in more general terms, their advantage of being native also sets up limits for a specific kind of knowledge.

With respect to mainland China, this situation in regard to intensive fieldwork changed little since 1949. Due to political reasons well known, western ethnographers were not allowed to carry out intensive fieldwork in mainland China after the communists came to power. Monograph writing in this case does not represent that of a lonely ethnographer's experience or, as Boon put it, 'Icarus with dirty feet', but rather represents that of, as I would argue, *Icarus without feet* at all!

To compare the difference between monograph writing on the mainland and that on Taiwan and Hong Kong may be illuminating. Not only was the scale of study on mainland China much larger than that on Taiwan and Hong Kong but there was also a stronger claim of emphasis on its historical change made by those who worked on the mainland. Much field research based on Taiwan and Hong Kong, if not all, seemed to cling to the 'synchronic' principle, ignoring the implications of change forced by the political situation on the mainland, and went into depth for the 'traditional' or classic characteristics of Chinese society. As Baker wrote in 1979, that is thirty years after the communists came to power:

> Much of tradition is still evident in contemporary society, and especially so in communities outside the People's Republic. Tradition no more stopped dead in 1900 or 1911 than did modernity begin in 1912 or 1949. So, in trying to assess kinship in action I have been able to indulge unrepentantly in chronological sleight-of-hand, using twentieth-century fieldwork studies to illustrate features of traditional scene, and using history to back up analysis of more recent times. This is not ideal, but materials must be sought where it can be found (1979: xi).

This is by no means to say, for instance, that examples given in Baker's work, which are mainly made of assumed situations are not useful. On the contrary Baker has probably provided the most clear picture of an 'ideal type' of traditional Chinese family, to use Weber's terms. However, the point is: inherent is the presupposition that history can be eliminated in such an approach of appealing to 'chronological sleight-of-hand' sources. To put it further, by imagining the essence of cultural institutions in Chinese society and ignoring historical conditions and contingencies, these authors made and created a classic picture of traditional Chinese society (cf. Wagner 1980). This position of focusing on a transcendental description of Chinese society has been argued against by, among others, Wolf and Huang (1980).

Those who worked on mainland China developed a much stronger sense of consciousness of historical change, though this consciousness of history did not derive from a self-critique of ethnographic writing but was rather forced by the political situation in the field. In other words, the actual historical change reshaped the history of regional ethnographic writing. However, this emergence of consciousness of historical change was accompanied by the loss of the intensive fieldwork that signified the discipline. Generations of anthropologists since Malinowski and Boas felt itchy without the 'ethnographic present'. There was a lack of satisfaction among anthropologists with using newspapers and magazines as well as

government documents as research sources. So, studies of people's daily life in the mainland were said to be characterised by a 'lack of accurate information' and to allow "a variety of half-formed ideas and guesses substitute for hard facts" (Parish and Whyte 1978: 1). The underlying assumption is that first hand ethnography equals 'hard facts'.

Not until the late 1970s was there the possibility of going to the mainland to carry out ethnographic research. Under this circumstance, in order to obtain 'hard facts', Hong Kong, where there was a flux of mainland refugees basically from Guangdong rural areas, became the ideal place as an ethnographic setting. Interviews conducted in Hong Kong on those who had left China, Guangdong in particular, became one of the important field methods in the late 1970s for monograph writers (see Parish and Whyte 1978; Chan, Madsen and Unger 1984). Impossibility also triggered a dimension of necessity. As Chan (et al.) argued, even if western scholars had been allowed into mainland China, their interviews in Hong Kong would have still maintained a significant value since villagers under the control of Chinese authorities might have not been able to say things as freely as their folks in Hong Kong did (1984: 2-3). Of course, the potential danger is that, following this logic, one may also argue that those who had left the mainland represented only one voice ideologically set against the communists. My point is simple: with respect to mainland China, ethnographic writing is not only historically specific but also ideologically charged.

However, in terms of style, Parish and Whyte's work is considerably different from that of Chan, Madsen and Unger, though both were conducted by means of interviews of mainlanders in Hong Kong. While the former aims at an overview of 'hard facts', basically about the Guangdong rural area, the later focuses on one village, that is Chen village which is also in Guangdong, by an approach of a more narrative nature. In Chan, Madsen and Unger's research, the ethnographer did not 'observe' but rather talked and listened to their interviewees both formally and informally. Two hundred and twenty three interviews were conducted among twenty-four Chen villagers and also more villagers from another six villages in Guangdong (1984: 5-7). The book, Chen Village, the result of their research, presents itself as a narration of a story, the past of the village through a series of political movements during the Maoist era. One of the merits is that Chen village is not represented as an 'ethnographic present' but a village history by means of conflicting memories (1984: 17). In other words, the history of Chen village is meant to be discursively represented by different groups of villagers. However, what is less satisfactory is that, in order to try to 'filter out' the interviewees' 'biases', Chan, Madsen and Unger tried to 'carefully cross-check each interview's testimony' for the purpose of getting at the truth. As they wrote, "But the descriptions of the campaign that they presented to us during dozens of hours of separate interviewing were largely similar" (1984: 3). In my view, this effort in a way contradicts what they aim to provide - a narration of village history from particular but different angles. They fear of being 'biased' reveals unwillingly their objectivist agenda.

* * *

When Chen Village was about to be published, the political situation in mainland China started to change. As the 1980s approached, economic reforms took place in mainland

China and field research was again possible. Mosher was one of the earliest ethnographers to go to mainland China in the later 1970s. By the term ethnographer I mean anthropologists who live in a village or a local community for an extended period. His account of getting into the village may still reflect the experiences of many other western scholars who have tried to get into the field of villages in mainland China. That is, the ethnographers had to face not only a cultural Other but also an ideological Other, namely the communists. As Mosher showed, apart from worries about officials' intervention, he was also concerned about his informants who might have been in trouble if they supplied information that was thought of as inappropriate by the officials (1983: x). In no case can one argue that this feeling was not true, but the point is that it may also be ideologically contaminated. Feelings are socially constructed (cf. Harré 1986).

In comparison with the way the native anthropologists found their locations for fieldwork, western anthropologists faced, as it was often said, tremendous difficulties going into mainland China since 1949. Official intervention was often said to be the fearful element. Mayfair M. Yang, who went to China in the early 1980s, objectified this feeling by calling it 'a culture of fear' and linked it to the power of the state. As she wrote:

> In the first half of the 1980s, the culture of fear was still a powerful force in constraining actions and speech in everyday life. To be sure, it was a milder form of the culture of terror that had reigned during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), but for me coming from another world, it was one of the main sources of cultural shock. ... Although the state serves as idea or totem for the expression and protection of social wholeness, it does so through a culture of fear which treats it as a sacred entity, as an entity with an awesome unity and a will of its own. Therefore, the presence of a culture of fear is a measure of the extent of state power and of the desire for an image of wholeness which is both reassuring and horrifying. To the extent that I became an active participant in the culture of fear, I also contributed to state power (1994: 20-21).

Although both deal with the difficulty of carrying out fieldwork in mainland China, 'the culture of fear', the possibility of official intervention, the impossibility of getting even to the 'partial truth', Yang has a different problem from that of Mosher. By making a dialectic account of the relationship between daily life, the state and the role of the ethnographer, Yang raised explicitly the question of how intersubjectivity underlies her ethnographic writing. This is different from the case of Mosher. When Mosher described his ethnographic approach, like many others, he stressed the role of participation of the ethnographer in the life of the Other - "to mourn with them at funerals and rejoice with them at marriages and the birth of sons..." (1982: ix). It is clear that, by this approach, there still exists a clearly defined, epistemological divide between the western subject who tries to represent another culture and the other culture as being represented. And, by doing so, Mosher, who kept his feet firmly on the foundation of functionalist assumptions which we discussed earlier, maintained a clear division between the ethnographer and his object of study.

In the case of Mosher, like many other western scholars, the fear that the ethnographer encounters in his fieldwork does not constitute a necessary part, but only forms a part of the background, of his study. That is, the ideological Other is given, as it were in the

case of Trobriand Islanders or 'We, the Tikopia', as the environment, the exotic condition, under which the ethnography is supposed to be written. In this sense, Yang made a radical change. For her, the fear itself constitutes a necessary part of her study and there is no possibility of understanding the Other without supplying an interpretation of this 'culture of fear' in the first place. This is why Yang raises the question of intersubjectivity, which inevitably leads to an examination of the problems of the formation of particular subjects and the role of state. To my mind, this is a crucial development in monograph writing with respect to the field of China. That is, both subjects and objects of ethnographic research are made and constituted rather than given.

Following Clifford, Yang called for a 'border crossing' approach in respect to subjectivity. It is interesting to note that Mayfair M. Yang herself is an American Chinese, which is a diasporic existence. That is, she was of American nationality, Chinese ancestry, born in Mayfair Square of London (this is how her name came to be), and inhabitant of various places world-wide. Her subjective position depends on the particular situation she engages in. For instance, her Chinese ancestry enabled her to sneak into her friends' houses without being taken as a foreigner in Beijing, while the American nationality secured her a place for questioning and research in the 'culture of fear' (M. M. Yang 1994: 25-28). To theorise the broader issues of 'border crossings', Yang referred to JanMohamed's recent analysis (1993) of four types of border crossings between the Third World and the West: those of the exile, the immigrant, the colonialist and the scholar/anthropologist. JanMohamed, in turn following the writings of Edward Said, tried to sketch out how the subjectivities of the four types have to be transformed by their encounter with another culture (cf. M. M. Yang 1994: 27-28).

Yang's discussion of border crossings reflects what Clifford calls 'travelling cultures' (1992) in which a hotel lobby is metaphorized as the ideal setting for fieldwork, since, as Clifford insisted, people are moving from one place to another and cultures are not villages of closed and tranquil communities but rather, ironically speaking, according to my understanding of Clifford's notion of 'travelling culture', 'travel agencies'.

This awareness of intersubjective interaction allows Yang to locate both, to use Fardon's terms, the 'autonomous, cerebrating western subject' and the Chinese state appropriately, in her analysis of the 'gifts, favours and banquets' of *guanxi* networks in modern China. Both in the case of the early native anthropologists and of the western anthropologists who work on China, there is so far a lack of being conscious of the formation of the subject, either as a focus of studies or as an agent of social transformation, in the discussion of Chinese society and culture. Few, so far, see the process of monograph writing as a historically situated act, and the role of the ethnographer is often assumed to be that of a transcriber, that is, taking notes, making records, writing them down, just as a chemist or a statistician would do to their experiments. Yang's work brings a consciousness to the problem of the formation of a subject by means of raising questions about the positioning of the ethnographer.

However, the problem, as I see it, is that, when discussing the problem of subjectivity, Yang, JanMohamed, and even to a degree Clifford, take some notionally actual, physical, positive side of subjectivity (i.e. American nationality and Chinese ancestry) as the prime

object of discussion. To my mind, the importance of a travel agent is not principally how it issues the tickets but the way in which it is discursively represented and the consequences of action as represented. In other words, there seems to exist a firmly asserted realism in Yang's discussion of transnational and/or translinguistic subjectivity. This realist approach inevitably leads Yang to categorise different people into different kinds of subjectivity but leaves her little room for observation of the contingent constitution and reconstitution of these subjectivities in practice notably by the anthropologist. My point is simple: It is not so much a matter of going to a hotel lobby to observe transnationality or transsubjectivity, rather, discursive practices in constituting subjectivity, which in turn produces and reproduces conditions for these practices, should be made the field of anthropological investigation.

* * *

In the above discussion, I did not touch the vast literature, produced by both Chinese and western sociologists/anthropologists, in recent years, in an effort to analyse and account for economic reforms and its consequences in rural China. This is because, firstly, what I have tried to show through the above discussion is how the subjective positions different kinds of monograph writers claim - their claims are always closely related to their own status and actual political situations in which their claims are made - influence their ethnographic writing as 'localizing strategies'. In this sense, the early native anthropologists, western anthropologists and overseas Chinese anthropologists (e.g. represented by Mayfair Yang) present three important groups. Secondly, it is also because I shall deal with detailed arguments about the economic reforms and its consequences in later chapters. In order to avoid redundant discussions, I have left some important monograph writers for further discussion in later chapters.

Let me sum up briefly the argument so far. First, there is a degree of mutual constitution of ethnographic research and the historical conditions in which these research are made. One cannot tell what is true without considering the historical context in which a monograph writer sets his or her own investigation, although this process of creating and recreating a history, a tradition, a culture, is not always conscious to the writer himself. Second, as a localizing strategy, the early native anthropologists were successful in borrowing the theoretical premises of ethnography from the west on the one hand and dismissing the core of this approach, that is the intensive fieldwork, on the other hand. In order to justify their empirical position, the early native anthropologists claimed that, more than simply 'being there', they were brought up in the communities which they studied. As the localizing strategy, a native anthropological subject was constituted both by way of being trained in the west and by way of being native. This native anthropological subject represented, reinforced, transformed the western anthropological subject. One crucial consequence of this transformation is that the native anthropologists turn from *Icarus with dirty feet* to *Icarus with no feet at all.* Among the 'trinity of elements' of modern anthropology, there was left only theories and monographs, while participant observation is replaced by, so to speak, remote memories. I argue that intensive fieldwork, characterised by a lonely, often suffering, ethnographer's experience, was for long simply a mirage which was made to excite the native anthropologists but never

existed. With respect to mainland China, western anthropologists were denied access to the field during the Maoist era. In Taiwan and Hong Kong, this western anthropological subject by and large followed the suit of the functionalist or structural-functionalist premises. Third, more recently, another kind of anthropological subject emerged in respect to sociological discussions of Chinese society. For instance, Mayfair Yang's discussion of transnational or translinguistic subjectivity in regard to ethnographic writing opens possibilities of discussions which help us rethink the process of ethnographic writing, the role of the ethnographer and the historical condition in which the ethnographer has to respond.

Like Moliere's *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme,* to know the fact that one has been speaking 'prose' for long does not change his way of speaking, this is to say that to be aware of the predicament of twentieth century ethnography does not mean that we can escape the problem of how we write. As Parkin put it, "if there are indeed problems in ethnographic description, they will not be solved by less detailed fieldwork and writing" (1990: 182; cf. Sanjek 1991: 611). Rabinow rightly calls for attention to the specific environment of the academic politics under which the post-colonial ethnographies are written (1986: 252-3). Marcus furthers this position by claiming that "the anthropological dissertation, typically a straightforward analytical and descriptive account from fieldwork, is the ethnography that most anthropologists must write. Since the granting of professional credentials has depended on its evaluation, it has tended to be conservative exercise" (1986: 265). The importance is: writing is bounded by its context. To be conscious of the context of ethnographic writing by a specific anthropological subject is the context under which my fieldwork was set to start.

My Choosing the Field and Subjectivity

Trained in economics and statistics in China, when I came in 1989 to London to take an anthropological course, I felt dizzy and my face flushed, when I heard my teacher Professor L. Caplan at SOAS talking about 'incest taboo' at the first meeting of the class of Introduction to Anthropology.[9] There were things which were not then thought of as teaching materials in China and people were not supposed to talk about sex among siblings or family members in the universities that I had attended in Taiyuan and Beijing. Later I read Malinowski's account of meaning in the Trobriand Islands, which says that, for them, words and actions are inseparable (1956: 309-316). On the other hand, for 'us', anthropologists in particular, there is no clear division between sense and nonsense (e.g. Leach 1970: 66). Time passed by, both not as quickly as I wished sometimes and too quick for me to grasp at other times, so that I gradually realised that Malinowski's assertions are often stripped out of historical context, becoming blatant generalisations of ethnographic presence.

My training in China did not help me much when I had to prepare for my fieldwork in 1990. Literacy and orality had been my original choice of topic, which turned out to be less relevant to my field experience. Not only was it true that "theory is not determinant of

[9]From 1989 to 1990, I did a MA course in social anthropology at SOAS. Since I knew nothing about anthropology then, I sat in on this course which was designed for the first year undergraduates.

ethnography" (Fardon 1990: 3) but also, in my case, that the thematic preparations made by the ethnographer were not determinant of his actual experience. Since there was no home village for me to return to, because both my parents have no relatives in the countryside, nor was there a place where I had been sent to be re-educated during the Cultural Revolution, which was an experience most Chinese youth of my generation, including both my brother and sister, had experienced, I suddenly realised that it was difficult to locate myself, although it was my own country. My criterion for a fieldwork site was, however, simple: a rural community with a medium sized population, hopefully not too industrialised.

Soon after I went back to Beijing in November of 1991, my first experience with a Hebei village came when a friend of mine introduced me to her home village. It is a village called Li Zhuang near Xingtai, Hebei Province. Since it was not very far away from Beijing, I went there to have a look, and it was arranged for me to stay with my friend's uncle who was living alone. A few village cadres came to visit me the first night, when I arrived, partly due to the influence of my friend and her uncle. The topic was naturally directed to possible investment for this village which had already been very successful in development of rural industries. After a few drinks, I suddenly realised that I was thought of as someone who had the potential of bringing business to the community. Nice food but difficult to swallow. I found out that I would have been isolated, if I stayed, by their kind arrangements. I would have been asked to stay with my friend's uncle, and he and I would have been constantly surrounded by local officials who were willing to help. The following day, I went back to Beijing without saying good-bye to anyone properly as if I had fled.

Kindness to ethnographers can also mean damage. My second experience brings even more proof of this point. Due to the first failure, I turned, like many other researchers in China would do, to official institutions for help. My university in Beijing kindly offered me their research base, a village called Dachengzhuang in Beijing suburb. There had been a few research projects carried out in this village and the university was also willing to provide me with statistics they had collected from Dachengzhuang. I was excited to talk to the officials from Fangshan County under which Dachengzhuang was directly administered. The officials from the county were very kind to me and willing to have me there but insisted that I should stay in a county hotel ten kilometres away from the village. They had even offered me a free bicycle in case I needed to travel to the village. By no means was I able to convince them that what I wanted to do was to live with 'peasants'. As an official said, "What is the point of living with them? Whenever you want to talk to them (i. e. peasants), we can bring them here to report to you."

This attitude is not held only among local officials. My colleagues from the department of statistics where I used to teach 'regression analysis' and 'sampling methods', who were all intoxicated with discovering new methods of quantitative analysis, also frowned at me when they heard that I wanted to live with 'peasants' for a year or, at least, several months. Most of them had the experience of being re-educated by 'peasants' during the Cultural Revolution. Mildly, some suggested to me that I could go to the countryside to have a look for about one or two weeks, while others opposed the idea of 'participant observation'. As a young lecturer

cynically said to me, "What can you get by living with peasants, I mean, apart from obtaining some lice?" This attitude of abhorrence towards 'participant observation' almost forced me to rely on myself in respect to finding a location. To make it clear, I am not saying that either my colleagues or local officials were suspicious of my motive for going to live in the countryside but, rather, such a motive in relation to the acquisition of knowledge was unimaginable to them. For both my colleagues and local officials, it was not thought to be politically dangerous for me to live with peasants, but it was inconceivable that knowledge could be obtained by living with villagers. In this context, help could mean misunderstanding and blockage.

I had been very dubious about the possibility of avoiding too much intervention from the officials who always tried to 'help' until I met a postgraduate student, Xicang, from the university where I used to teach, who came from a village called Zhaojiahe in Shaanxi, and whose family was still living there. When I talked with him, I was very careful of not being too clear about what I wanted to do, particularly not to mention my anthropological intention. Anthropology, a very vague and seemingly glamorous term for many people I know in Beijing, often scared away villagers or even my friends. What I told this student was that I had never had any experience of living in the countryside, so I wanted to stay in a village for a while without too much intervention from local officials. Xicang was enthusiastic and very friendly. He wrote to his parents in the village asking their permission for me to stay with them and, meanwhile, he started to talk about the village to me. This was in December of 1991 in Beijing. Two weeks later, Xicang's father, Wanbin, replied with a positive answer, saying that I was welcome to stay with the family as long as I would like to. The following day, I packed my luggage, basically books and notebooks, and left Beijing for this 'unofficial' north-western Chinese village.

It proved to be a good choice in the sense that, when I was in the village, I was able to live, work and play with ordinary villagers without any official interference, which was what I wanted. Official interference in this village by then would mean long, unnecessary banquets. My position is different from the native anthropologists discussed earlier: I was not brought up in Zhaojiahe and I knew little about the area. Zhaojiahe did present itself as an 'exotic' Other to me since I had never been to a village for more than several days before my visit to Zhaojiahe. During the whole period of my fieldwork, I was recurrently shocked by the way the villagers did things. Unlike the western anthropologists, I never felt scared but often felt I was being manipulated and even angry. My fieldwork experience has in a way influenced my approach: I see the Other or the 'complex whole' from various points of views situated in everyday practices. I shall elaborate my theoretical orientation in the following section.

By staying with three hosts in the village, my account of village life may appear to be biased since most examples of daily practice were recorded from my close interaction with my hosts and their networks of social relations. To describe a particular village community in detail already raises a series of problems, let alone observing this community through the social networks of my hosts. Villages in mainland China vary in the forms of their main corporate groups and social institutions according to geographic, linguistic or ethnic, and environmental differences. China's rural society, even within a single province, is so diverse

that any generalisation is doomed to fail. Nonetheless it raises the question of representativeness of such single village study. With respect to this question, two points need to be made. The first one, which concerns the nature of anthropological argument in general, is that I am not going to argue that this village is in any sense a 'typical' one which represents *the* 'Chinese culture'. Both terms, 'typical' and 'Chinese culture', are questionable enterprises (e.g. Wolf and Huang 1980: vii; Whyte 1992). The second point is that there are indeed similarities in the forms of economic and social institutions among villages in the area. However, the point is that these similarities and differences overlap with each other from one village to another in such a way that one cannot group them according to definite boundaries (e.g. Fei 1988: 93-100). The difficulty also arises in that political, economic, geographical, demographic boundaries are sufficiently contingent as the product of particular historical circumstances and one village may appear politically and economically close to its neighbouring villages to its south and geographically to its eastern neighbours, for instance. My main concern in this thesis has less to do with accounting for its economic or political structures than supplying an account of its practice which produces and is produced by village organisations and institutions.

From this point of view, my three hosts in the village provide an intermediate network which helps me outline intravillage groupings on the one hand and locate my own fieldwork experience on the other. They are both the subjects of study and agents in their own right as they were the commentators on local life. Let me briefly outline their differences. My first host, Wanbin, that is Xicang's father, used to be a village cadre during the Maoist period. I stayed with Wanbin for more than three months. His eight 'brothers'[10] constitute a major force in Dawa which is one of seven villager groups in Zhaojiahe. Among these brothers, there are differences in terms of both political attitudes and cultural values since they range from sixty to thirty in age and differ in political and economic backgrounds. Some of these brothers were my friends or informants in the village, especially in the first two months. Although they each see the society differently, these eight brothers are generally thought of as good peasants by other villagers. Among these eight brothers three had been appointed as either the village head or the party secretary in the past.

My second host was Zunxi whom I met through another villager, and I stayed in Zunxi's house for several weeks. Also coming from a large branch of close *zijiawu* brothers, Zunxi was thought to be a half villager since he used to work in Xi'an, the capital of the province. Zunxi's experience of working outside the village reflects the general status of his other brothers. Among his brothers, many have left, and some returned to, the village, working outside as professionals or factory workers. In comparison with Wanbin's brothers, this group of brothers supply a view from the outside. They comment on the village life from a different angle from that of Wanbin's brothers. They are thought to be better interpreters of local knowledge by

[10]They are not brothers of the same parents but share a great grandfather. They are actually called in the village 'a close *zijiawu*'. A full discussion of kinship classification in the village will be given in Chapter 2. For a discussion of Wanbin's eight *zijiawu* brothers, see Appendix 2 and Figure 10.

other villagers, since they have been to another world which others cannot imagine. Their account of village life often represents how the outsider would appreciate the village life.

My third host was Famin, whose family was related to Zunxi; but no one in Famin's family has been successful in pursuing another kind of work outside the village. I stayed in Famin's house for about two months, until I left the village. Some of his brothers tried to leave the village, but all returned, because they had failed to establish a successful career in other places. His family is a very big one, with five brothers and five sisters from the same parents. Famin was portrayed as a 'typical', 'honest' peasant who knows little about the outside. In generational ranks, Famin, although in his early thirties, is senior. This means that - also partially due to his family's size - his family celebrations such as weddings and funerals are always more glamorous than others' - more people attending and more money spent. Staying with his family allowed me to watch closely how social occasions such as weddings and funerals were talked about and commented upon.

Before I go into the details of my ethnography, let us first turn to an outline of my theoretical orientations and the main arguments.

The Field of Representation and Everyday Practices

> All social life is essentially *practical*. All the mysteries which lead theory towards mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and the comprehension of this practice.
>
> Karl Marx[11]

This thesis has two aims. First, my concern is to provide a detailed ethnographic account of a post-reform village in north-western China by approach of examining how fields of social relations are formed by and through discursive representations of the village and *how the formation of social relations and representations of the village are constituted in daily practice*. Second, I will consider some of the arguments which have been put forward in the analysis of Chinese culture and society by other scholars in the light of this material and try to look at whether modification is needed and, if so, in what ways. With regard to the second consideration, it is inevitable, it seems to me, to address questions beyond the problem of Chinese culture and society and reach broader and more general anthropological issues, although my theoretical considerations may not always be explicit in each chapter.

Two orientations of my ethnographic writing are as follows. Firstly, although Zhaojiahe constitutes the field site geographically, I shall try to provide a study of its discursive practices and to look at how the villagers are constituted in the practices that they carry out. The field is not only what I observed but also what the villagers commented on and how I reflected upon it. Even within Zhaojiahe, different villagers represent their own village differently, sometimes in strikingly different ways. Secondly, I stress the significance of everyday practices and argue that it is the specific kind of practice, historically situated and manifested in everyday life, that gives form and rigour to - to use the term in a loose way -

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[11]Quoted in Bottomore (et al.) 1963: 84.

social structure and organisation of the community. I take the view that formal organisations of the village such as kinship or political institutions are themselves best understood as practices, and I refute the view that these organisations impose 'uniformal' coercion on daily life. Rather, I argue that formal organisations as complex practices are constituted and reconstituted in everyday practices. I now elaborate these two points.

Zhaojiahe, a village in north-western China, can be seen as a conventional anthropological fieldwork setting: a village composed of a single surname group within a notionally closed territory. However, this 'objective' image of geographic and demographic observation vaporises when confronted with specific commentaries made by different agents both within and outside the village. Taking into account the historical conditions of the 1980s in rural China, I see that the formation of fields of social relations was inevitably linked to how the village, present and past, was represented differently by different groups of villagers. In this sense, my ethnographic field is constituted by the discursive representations of the village and their relation to the formation of the fields of social relations. Since my choices of the themes rely on topics publicly articulated by the villagers, the thesis may seem to be 'haphazard' in respect to the arrangement of chapters, according to the conventional criteria of anthropological analysis. This is to say that I do not 'intend to focus thematically on one particular institution' but to produce a 'community study' arranged in terms of the villagers' commentaries. In this sense, my description of the village life is by and large synchronic, especially when I turn to examine the daily practice of the villagers. To stress this again, these practices are historically constituted in response to wider socioeconomic changes. I shall return to an outline of the structure of the thesis later.

* * *

My main theoretical concern is to consider seriously the recent development of the analysis of implicit knowledge and everyday practice which has been put forward particularly by de Certeau and Bourdieu. Despite the fact that anthropological studies have always touched the topic of everyday practice, sinologists or anthropologists working on China, either within or outside the mainland, have seemed to place their main considerations upon either organisations of, for instance, family, kinship, lineage, local group, ancestor worship, and so forth or institutions of the political economy of the state. Such research may indeed be fruitful with regard to achieving an understanding of these particular organisations and institutions but they have by and large neglected the theoretical significance of everyday practices and the extent to which organisations and institutions have to be understood as and in practice. An inherent assumption of this 'top-to-bottom' approach is that people are implicitly or explicitly treated as passive, and social structure and functions are taken as existence in themselves.

The recent discussion of the problem of human agency in the west reflects the concern which aims to bridge the gap between, say, social totality and individual action. However, where Giddens attempts to bridge structure and human agency in his notion of 'structuration' (e.g. 1984), Taylor notes that much agency in society is neither of single individual humans nor

great collectivities, but of shifting, historically constituted complex forms (1985).[12] In my view, a 'practice approach' provides a possible solution to the problem of human agency. As de Certeau put it, "this goal will be achieved if everyday practices, 'the ways of operating' or doing things, no longer appear as merely the obscure background of social activity, and if a body of theoretical questions, methods, categories, by penetrating this obscurity, make it possible to articulate them" (1984: xi). Underlying this claim there is a shift in stress of focus of the object of studies. In this case, it is villagers and ordinary people who carry out everyday practices and should be examined in the first place as 'complex agents'. "The presence and circulation of a representation (taught by preachers, educators, and popularizers as the key to socioeconomic advancement) tells us nothing about what it is for its users. We must first analyze its manipulation by users who are not its makers. Only then can we gauge the difference or similarity between the production of the image and the secondary production hidden in the process of its utilization" (de Certeau 1984: xiii).

However, if it is accepted that it is practice, particularly the everyday practice, that needs to be examined in the first place, how can that be? In other words, what is the formal structure of practice, or is there any? Pierre Bourdieu, in a series of serious, if not entirely successful, attempts (esp. 1977, 1990), has developed a number of analytical tools in respect to building a 'theory of practice'. I will examine Bourdieu's notion of practice and 'habitus', which I think hold the key for an understanding of his 'theory of practice', as follows.

The word 'practice' can be, and has been, used for different purposes in various disciplines (Ortner 1984). Bourdieu's idea of practice, which derives from his effort to break down and bridge the dualist assumptions of western epistemology, particularly objectivism versus subjectivism, has two important characteristics. Firstly, according to Bourdieu, practice is specifically located in space and time. In particular, practice has a dimension of time. As Bourdieu writes, "practice unfolds in time and it has all the correlative properties, such as irreversibility, that synchronization destroys. Its temporal structure, that is, its rhythm, its tempo, and above all its directionality, is constitutive of its meaning. ... In short, because it is entirely immersed in the current of time, practice is inseparable from temporality, not only because it is played out in time, but also because it plays strategically with time and especially with tempo" (1990: 81). This is to say that there is no action which can be stripped out of its specific location of space and time. This is one of the intrinsic characteristics of practice. Secondly, as Jenkins points out, practice according to Bourdieu is not entirely consciously organised and orchestrated. Nothing is purely accidental but neither is it wholly intentional. Improvisation and strategy, or, as de Certeau stresses, 'tactics' (1984: esp. xix), are intrinsic characteristics of practice. Therefore, practice, as the form of social life, is characterised by

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[12]Collingwood distinguishes instruments (what, or who, carries out action) from agents and patients. Agents are that which commands an action to be carried out and/or takes responsibility for that action (1942: 8). Agents are often 'complex' in that they involve more than one person as in households or relative-based groupings. Such groupings commonly change somehow from situation to situation and so are not identical with corporate groups. Subjects, or patients, are to be upon whom others carry out actions. They differ from objects in the action presupposing they are conscious. Agency, instrumentality and patiency are not given in nature but discursive and recognisable through discursively situated practices. Different people and groups in any instance are likely to have different, contested accounts of agency. As Hobart put it, 'agency and patiency are situational, overlapping, ironic and under-determined' (1990a: 96).

fluidity and a degree of indeterminacy, like - as Bourdieu's metaphor says - a game (Bourdieu 1990: 66-8, 80-2; cf. Jenkins 1992: 67-74).

In order to understand the mechanism of practice, among all the tools for an analysis of practice that Bourdieu has developed, 'habitus' is the one that stands at the core of his 'theory of practice'. As Bourdieu defines it:

> The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transportable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor. (1990: 53)

There are several points that need to be clarified. First, according to Bourdieu, 'habitus' is "constituted in practice and is always oriented towards practical functions" (1990: 52). That is, 'habitus' generates practice which in turn constitutes 'habitus'. The dialectic relation between practice and 'habitus' is the key for a understanding of 'the logic of practice'. Second, with respect to one of the main concerns of Bourdieu's 'theory of practice' - Bourdieu's effort to break down the dualism between objectivism and subjectivism, 'habitus' is said to be "predisposed to function as structuring structures" on the one hand and, on the other hand, outcomes in practice generated by the 'habitus' are not predetermined by the conscious aims of actors. It is rather "an internal law through which the law of external necessities, irreducible to immediate constraints, is constantly exerted" (1990: 54). Or to put it in another way, Bourdieu sometimes calls it 'the internalization of externality'. Third, the 'habitus', which is a product of history, "produces individual and collective practices - more history - in accordance with the schemes generated by history" (1990: 54). Bourdieu uses the phrase 'system of dispositions' to indicate this quality of the 'habitus' but, again, dialectically articulated, it is "a present past that tends to perpetuate itself into the future by reactivation in similarly structured practices" (1990: 54). However, it is not the history that can be represented as history, but rather an *embodied* history. As Bourdieu says, "the *habitus* - embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history - is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product" (1990: 56). Fourth, the 'habitus' is embodied in human agents, both bodily and mentally. This embodiment is implicit. As Bourdieu writes, "bodily hexis is political mythology realised, *em-bodied*, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable manner of standing, speaking and thereby of *feeling* and *thinking* ... The principles embodied in this way are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness, and hence cannot be touched by voluntary, deliberate transformation, cannot even be made explicit" (Bourdieu 1977: 93, 94; quoted in Jenkins 1992: 75, emphasis in the original).

The key point is that the 'habitus' exists *only in* practice. It is only through ways of talking, ways of doing, ways of making things and so forth that the 'habitus' exists. As Jenkins puts it: "it is not just *manifest* in behaviour, it is an integral *part* of it (and vice versa)" (Jenkins 1992: 75, emphasis in the original). The implication is obvious. In order to understand certain

types of representations, one also has to examine the way in which these representations are, so to speak, 'embodied' in practice. The significance of the practice of everyday life is therefore crucial for an understanding of different representations. Specifically, in my case, I will argue that, contrary to previous attempts focusing on organisations or institutions, the practice of everyday life of the Zhao villagers 'embodies' the way in which their social life is organised.

* * *

Despite the tremendous effort made by Bourdieu to 'deconstruct' the epistemological dualism of subjectivism versus objectivism in the hope of bridging the gap between individual agency and social structure, critics of his work have pointed out, among many other problems (see, for instance, Calhoun et al. (eds.) 1993; Jenkins 1992: esp. 91-9), that Bourdieu's approach assumes an objective point of view (Thompson 1991: 11; Jenkins 1992: esp. 91-2). One of the inherent propositions embedded in objectivism, just as Bourdieu has tried to argue against in many places (see also de Certeau 1984: esp. xi-xii), is correlated to the shadow of behaviourism or, in a more anthropological term, transactionalism. In my view, Bourdieu's effort to build a 'theory of practice' is like the effort Don Quixote made against the windmill, since the very nature of practice may make it impossible to theorise in the way that Bourdieu intends.[13] It is like using a basket to measure water: water runs away before it can be weighed.

In respect to the characteristics of practice, Foucault provides an alternative approach in his actual analyses of different kinds of practices such as institutional and disciplinary. Specifically, I am interested in two ideas that Foucault has articulated, if not always explicitly, with respect to practice in his various writings ranging from the history of madness (1973) to the technology of the self (1988), although Foucault's work does not present an unchanging theoretical position (see for instance Best and Kellner 1991: 34-75; Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982). Firstly, dispersion constitutes one of the key elements in the Foucauldian notion of practice. Dispersion not only means that there are always multiple forces engaged in practice but, more importantly, that the very nature of practice is its diversity and multiplicity (see Foucault 1972: 3-17; Best and Kellner 1991: 42-45). It is the notion of 'discursive practice' that allows Foucault to relate madness to reason, discipline to the normalising strategies, sexuality to the technique of the self, the constitution of the subjects to power, and power to knowledge. Foucault has created a field of dispersion in which any totalizing analysis is doomed to fail. For instance, a Marxist analysis is not satisfactory to Foucault because it inherently proposes 'a total description' which "draws all phenomena around a single centre - a principle, a meaning, a spirit, a world-view, an overall shape; a general history, on the contrary, would deploy the space of a dispersion" (Foucault 1972: 10). This kind of totalizing strategy entails reductionism: to make rich, changing situations into a blatant, generalised, totalized explanation. Arguing against different kinds of totalizations, Foucault has analysed different kinds of discursive practices which have been excluded or marginalized by the total description. Let us take his Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison as an example. As de Certeau wrote, "Instead of

[13]Bourdieu's elegance in his actual analysis, for instance, of 'taste' (1984) sometimes does not entirely conform with his 'theory of practice'. The effort to construct a 'theory of practice' may betray the irony inherently embedded in the term 'practice'. As Bourdieu says, '... certain properties of the logic of practice which by definition escape theoretical apprehension' (1990: 86).

analyzing the apparatus exercising power (i.e. the localizable, expansionist, repressive, and legal institutions), Foucault analyzes the mechanisms *(dispositifs)* that have sapped the strength of these institutions and surreptitiously reorganized the functioning of power: 'miniscule' technical procedures acting on and with details, redistributing a discursive space in order to make it the means of a generalized 'discipline' *(surveillance)"* (de Certeau 1984: xiv).

Secondly, in his actual analysis of different kinds of practices, Foucault treated practice always as historical constructs, not in the conventional sense that historical events are taken as interrelated sets of meaningful successions or processes but in the sense of contingency and unpredictability. Practice is contingent and there are no predetermined laws which can be detected beforehand and outside practice (see Foucault, 1972; 1977). In specific, for Foucault, time no longer presents itself as an external coordinate in which practices are carried out but, rather, time (as well as space) is constituted and reconstituted as and in practice (see for instance Foucault 1979; 1980; 1988). In other words, in practice there is an uncertainty; practice transforms itself in the very moment it is actualised.

In order to understand this approach towards practice better and to consider the possibility of applying this idea of practice to the actual analysis of a Chinese village, it may be helpful to review briefly Bakhtin's model of language as dialogic practices. As we have seen earlier, Bakhtin's premise about language as a dialogue, contrary to de Saussure's promotion of language as a system of difference, a 'self-contained whole and principle of classification', has been suggested as an alternative model for ethnographic writing since it allows 'polyphony' and 'heteroglossia' into textual construction (Clifford 1986, 1988b). In relation to the problem of practice, I shall briefly outline the relevant insights derived from Bakhtin's model of language, which may be borrowed as a framework for the analysis of social action.

The first point that I would like to address is Bakhtin's stress of *situation*. Shifting from the 'monologic' to the 'dialogic', one of the most important premises of Bakhtin is that utterance is always situational. As Emerson and Holquist put it, "in Bakhtin's thought the place from which we speak plays an important role in determining what we say" (1986: x). A dialogue is always historically, socially, and ideologically situated. "Verbal communication can never be understood and explained outside of this connection with a concrete situation" (Volosinov, 1975: 95). Speaking involves not only linguistic elements - lexical, grammatical and syntaxical - but also positions both the speaker and the listener take. These positions are first of all, in Bakhtin's word, 'socioideological'. That is, no utterance is neutral. Therefore, utterance, the realisation of language, also concerns thematic content, style and compositional structure due to its situational characteristics. That is, linguistic features such as lexical, grammatical and syntaxical elements only make it possible for utterance to be seen as separate pieces of a set of potential selections of language usage (sentences), while 'socioideological' situations determine the choice of linguistic units in respect to particular circumstances.

Since Bakhtin's model of language re-establishes the *dialogic situation*, with all potential possibilities and contingencies in practice, as the focus of study, my second point is the question of how a sentence (i.e. a dead utterance) is vitalised and then becomes an utterance (i.e. a sentence in use). That is, how does an individual choose a particular sentence in a particular

situation? To parallel this question, one may ask: how does an individual behave in a particular circumstance? Here Bakhtin's idea of 'speech genres' comes:

> All three of these aspects -- thematic content, style, and compositional structure -- are inseparably linked to the *whole* of the utterance and equally determined by the specific nature of the particular sphere of communication. Each separate utterance is individual, of course, but each sphere in which language is used develops its own *relatively stable types* of these utterances. These we may call *speech genres* (1986: 60, emphasis in the original).

From the perspective of the wholeness of the utterance, Bakhtin argues that one speaks only in generic forms, that is, 'relatively stable types', which are formed in relation to specific spheres of social life. As he wrote: "The speaker's speech will is manifested primarily in the *choice of a particular speech genre.* This choice is determined by the specific nature of the given sphere of speech communication, semantic (thematic) considerations, the concrete situation of the speech communication, the personal composition of its participants, and so on" (1986: 78, emphasis in the original). Although Bakhtin makes a division between the primary genres (i.e. simple such as daily conversations) and the secondary genres (i.e. complex such as novels), he stresses the point that all utterances are generic; the secondary genres are derived from the primary genres (1986: 61-2). With respect to their characteristics, Bakhtin argues again that the intrinsic feature of speech genres is their heterogeneity, the enormous variety of forms of combinations of these forms in addition to the forms of language (cf. Emerson and Holquist 1986: xvi).

Thirdly, in relation to our discussion of practice, another point that I would like to address is that "the forms of language and the typical forms of utterances, that is, speech genres, enter our experience and our consciousness together, and in close connection with each other" (Bakhtin 1986: 78). To make it clear: speech genres are social and no individual experience of speaking can exist without allowing, at the same time, a socially constructed speech genre into the individual's consciousness. This may help explain the process in which the villagers carry out practices of everyday life which in turn constitute the villagers themselves. Following Bakhtin, I am tempted to suggest that, instead of being constantly haunted by the dualist ghost of individual versus society, we may move to examine social actions of the villagers in terms of forms, styles and genres of daily practices, and try to look at how the villagers are constituted and reconstituted in practices they produce and reproduce. Although Bakhtin's model comes from his discussion of language, I intend to argue that his framework of analysis can be borrowed for carrying out sociological studies, just as Clifford borrows Bakhtin's model of language to suggest a new paradigm for ethnographic writing.

* * *

Bakhtin claimed that "all the diverse areas of human activity involve the use of language. Quite understandably, the nature and forms of this use are just as diverse as are the areas of human activity" (1986: 60). This assertion raises the question of the extent to which language can and should be understood as human action. What however is the difference of language as action from that, for instance, of making food?

A little history may help to comprehend the present situation. As Ardener observed more than twenty years ago, unlike the situation in the United States, where anthropological linguistics flowed, via Boas and Sapir, until the present day, "British social anthropologists", as Henson showed, "have been ill at ease with language ever since the nineteenth-century beginnings" and "possibly nothing today so clearly exemplifies that sadly widening rift between the older and the newer social anthropology than the different attitudes to language to be found on either side" (Ardener 1971: ix-x). As Ardener pointed out, the irony is that, by way of Lévi-Strauss's influence, the theoretical significance of linguistics has been taken up by British social anthropologists but the empirical studies of the subject was long neglected (1971: ix). In my view, the changing situation with 'the newer anthropology' in Britain reflects the general observation that Taylor made - an 'explosive growth of the science of linguistics' in this century (1985: 215).

My concern here is specific. Among different aspects of anthropological linguistics (e.g. Lévi-Strauss 1963; Tambiah 1968; Leach 1964; Bloch 1975b; Douglas 1975; Parkin 1982), I am particularly concerned with the problem of rhetoric, that is, the way in which things are said and the agents that do so. De Certeau, after having made a division between strategy and tactics, and pointed out that many everyday practices are tactical in character, continued: "The discipline of rhetoric offers models for differentiating among the types of tactics. This is not surprising, since, on the one hand, it describes the 'turns' or tropes of which language can be both the site and the object, and, on the other hand, these manipulations are related to the ways of changing (seducing, persuading, making use of) the will of another (the audience)" (1984: xx). The importance of language or 'speech act', as Searle called it (1971), is that it can be 'both the site and object'. In other words, *language can act both as actions and on their actions.*

I do not intend to elaborate on the vast literature of anthropological studies of the uses of language here but let me briefly introduce Parkin's early work on rhetorical strategies and, in relation to our discussion of speech genres, highlight the significance of the stress on the way in which things are said. This has extremely important implications for my study of Zhao villagers, since, in the village, one has to adopt as well as adapt to the specific forms of behaviour or speech according to different circumstances.

Taking an anthropological approach, Parkin made a good example of how rhetoric can be used as a means of installing responsibility among Kenya farmers. According to Parkin, rhetoric is defined as "a type of ritual: it says something about the speaker, the spoken-to, and the situation, which goes beyond what is contained in the surface message" (1975: 114). In a study of the Giriama people of Kenya, looking at how bureaucrats publicise the 'need' for rural economic development and how other local groups react, Parkin argued that "rhetoric, like ritual, may be more than a symbolic reaffirmation of social relations. Through rhetoric people have licence, so to speak, to explain and evaluate the causes and consequences of social relations, sometimes to the point of distortion. Rhetoric is thereby dynamically involved in their organisation and perpetuation" (1975: 119).

Bloch put this stance into general terms by relating the way in which people talk to each other to the exercise of authority in traditional societies. Starting with his criticism of

political anthropology which used to make "what is called the political an extremely difficult thing to observe and as a result it is not quite clear how this *thing* is related to data" (1975a: 2, emphasis in the original), Bloch argued that political control, or exercise of political power, may be undertaken through the way in which people talk to each other. There are serious problems in the way in which Bloch articulated his 'political oratory', including problematic assumptions about culture, 'tradition', 'traditional' society, etc., but he made his point in an extreme formulation:

> The process whereby one is caught by the formalisation of oratory into accepting without the possibility of question what is proposed is an everyday occurrence experienced whenever people stop and consider what they are doing. ... On these occasions if you have allowed somebody to speak in an oratorical manner you have practically accepted his proposal. The reason is that the code adopted by the speaker contains within itself a set pattern of speech for the other party. What gets said, or rather cannot be said, is laid down by this polite, respectful, behaviour - both linguistic and non-linguistic. ... The speaker and hearer have slipped into a highly structured situation which contains the hierarchical situation which only allows a one way relationship (1975a: 9).

The relevance of this discussion of rhetoric is that, when looking at representations made by villagers, we should not only look at what has been said but, more importantly, examine *how* it is said. That is, who is making a speech or a statement or a comment or a representation, and so forth, and under what circumstances?

* * *

My fieldwork experience provides a clue for unfolding the themes of my arguments of the thesis. Chapter 1, which aims to provide background knowledge, portrays Zhaojiahe by means of referring to several themes of public concern in the village, of which I was particularly aware in the first few weeks after my arrival. These include the refutation of the present economic reforms, the appraisal of the Maoist era, the marriage crisis, criticism of corruption of the village cadres, and so forth. These topics are not isolated elements, but rather dialogically construed meanings, presenting a specific representation by the villagers of their own village in response to the wider socioeconomic changes taking place in the early 1980s. The materials used in this chapter, which aim to situate the village in one moment of a particular historical stream, are not only obtained by my 'observation', but also achieved by my listening to the way in which Zhao villagers talked about and commented upon the past and the present of their village.

Chapter 2 examines the way in which Zhao villagers make uses of kinship in daily life and the conventional organisation of social relations. By examining the indigenous assumptions about kin relationships and their connection with the way in which accommodation is arranged in the village, I argue that kinship as an institution is practical and socioeconomic in nature. In respect to the changing social environment in rural China since the late 1970s, it is evident that a domestic model of kinship replaces a descent model of kinship as guiding principles in regulating basic social relations, given that Zhaojiahe as a single surname village has been built upon the principles of patrilineal descent and virilocal marriage. Village endogamy became a popular practice in the past decade. This was explained

by Zhao villagers as a result of the increasing difficulty in recruiting brides from other villages. I argue that the traditional organisation of marriage, which survived its encounter with the Maoist revolution, gave way to the need for producing broader social space for economic co-operation within the village. As a consequence, a broader recognition and definition of social relationships occur.

Chapter 3 looks at how Zhao villagers build marriage ties, which were thought of as the primary - if not the only - means of extending their networks of social relations into the neighbouring villages in the past. The focus of this chapter is to examine in detail *how* affinal relations are created and established. Zhao villagers see the marriage negotiation as a process, which has to be done through the help of a matchmaker as the mediator between the two sides. The core of the marriage negotiation is about its finances, particularly about the money and gifts transferred from the bridegroom's side to the bride's side. Although this examination of aspects of marriage may show that there are similarities between what the Zhao villagers do and what has been portrayed as characteristic of the traditional Chinese marriage, my intention is to demonstrate how the practical arrangements involved in the process of marriage form the heart of institutions such as marriage and kinship. I argue that it is the details of arrangements involved in the process of marriage that excite, stimulate, animate Zhao villagers. One implication derived from the discussion of marriage practice is that, for Zhao villagers, social relationships are changing as well as changeable enterprises.

Chapter 4 presents, in a way, a summary of the previous discussions about kinship and marriage. In this chapter, I turn to look at how the fields of social relations, classified by kinship and linked through marriage, are signified and reiterated by presentation and representation of food. Presentation and representation of food signify, make uses of, transform social relations already established. Specifically, in this chapter, I look at three particular areas of uses of food in daily life. Firstly, food is used as a means of reiterating social relationships. Food, as well as the way it is served and eaten, serves a social function in differentiating men from women. Secondly, not only relationships but also timing, that is, the social rhythm, is marked by presentation of food. To tell what day it is today, one simply needs to turn to look at one's own or other's dining tables. Thirdly, I will look at not only the kind of food but also the way in which it is prepared. I suggest that there is a link between how food is prepared and the way in which agricultural work is carried out.

So far, my discussion has been about the way in which the fields of social relations are created and formed. In other words, my main concern has been about the way in which social relationships are established and maintained. In Chapter 5, I look at several main themes of everyday practices such as bargaining, decoration, violence, craftsmanship and so forth, and focus on how the Zhao villagers produce and are produced by the practices that they carry out on various daily occasions. In order to understand this process of mutual conditioning between social action and its agents, I shall provide a series of detailed ethnographic examples of everyday strategies and tactics. Chapter 5 aims to show - to use Bourdieu's terminology - 'the logic of practice' of the Zhao villagers. I argue that the core characteristic of 'the logic of practice' in the village is its situationality. I use the term 'situationality' to refer to a set of

strategies and tactics with which Zhao villagers learn to deal with different people in different ways. Everyday practices in the village are first of all practices of differentiating people according to different circumstances. It is the effects of an action and the situation under which an action is carried out that determine what kind of strategies or tactics should be employed. Zhao villagers are always fully aware of the contexts in which they act.

In a sense, Chapter 5 forms a bridge between the first and second half of the thesis. Chapter 5 helps us understand how social relationships are changeable and changing enterprises on the one hand and, on the other, it provides clues for discussions in the following chapters. In the second half of the thesis, my main focus is on the way in which Zhao villagers (as 'subjects' or 'persons') act and how they are made and transformed by their own actions.

Chapter 6 looks at the village celebrations and focuses on two particular themes of practices, both of which are derived from the discussions of daily practices in the previous chapter. With regard to the wedding celebration, I raise the question of the extent to which emotion is socially constructed and argue - by examining the uses of violent physical contact on various daily occasions - that there is no essential correlation between the expression of an emotion and the situation in which it is required. I argue against the view that there are 'inner experiences' of unchanging cultural attributes such as happiness or anger and maintain that it is the situation that determines the form and expression of one's emotion in the village. For Zhao villagers, emotions do not have some kind of particular essence adhered to by their psychology. Emotions are constantly transformed by the practices of which they are part. It is the practice, particularly by means of participation of public and collective activities, that Zhao villagers learn to express or, rather, not to express, their feelings. With respect to funerals, I set out to look - among other aspects of the funeral celebration - at how Zhao villagers carry out practices by which they are able to separate the form of celebrations from its content. For instance, Zhao villagers enjoy and laugh at funerals, where I assumed that they should have shown 'grief' or 'feel' sad on these occasions. Zhao women wail at the mourning ceremonies while joking with their friends. I suggest that Zhao villagers are able to perform or act on social occasions according to certain social 'norms' without rendering their personal emotions or feelings.

The last substantial chapter deals with the way in which Zhao villagers act in a changing economic-political environment. There is a vast literature which focus on the changing character of rural China since the early 1980s, particularly on the changes of economic and political organisations. My aim in this chapter is not to discuss how economic-political relations within the village have changed; instead, I try to look at a set of practices that underlies these changing relations. I shall place Zhao villagers at the centre of my focus and look at the way they (both the village cadres and ordinary villagers) employ certain strategies to cope with the changing social environment. My theoretical stance is that economic-political institutions are not external to practice.

Chapter 7 starts with a discussion of the emergence of economic stratification in the village and looks at Zhao villagers' interpretations of the changing economic environment. The way in which Zhao villagers explain why some brothers are better off than others reveals their underlying assumptions about economic development and accumulation of wealth. One

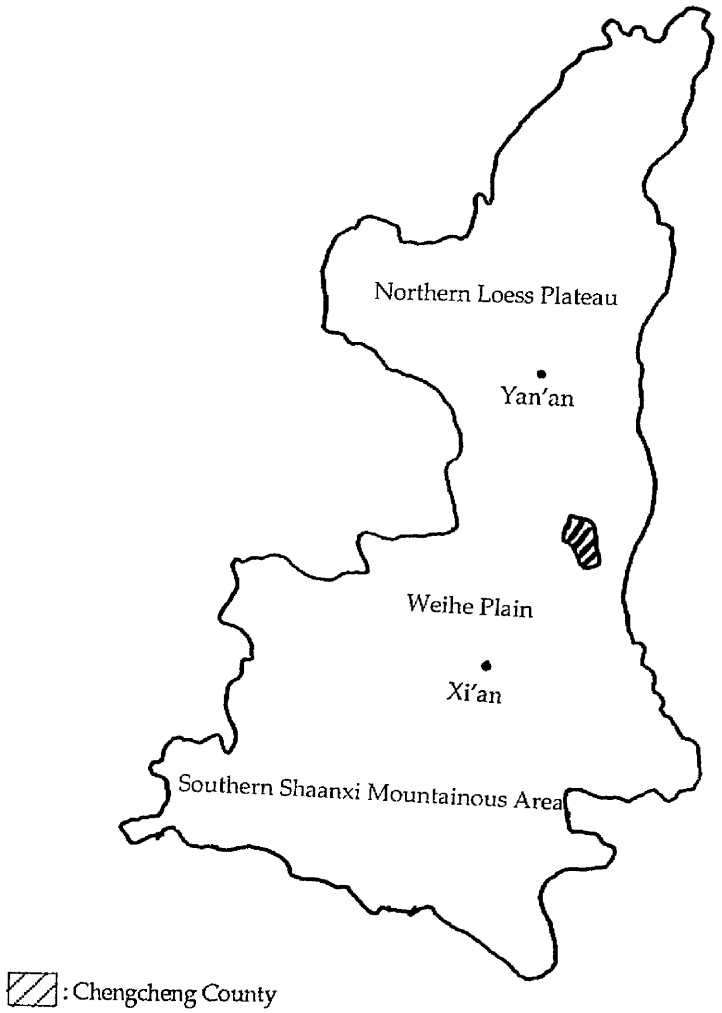
observation is that space (rather than time) becomes a main source of social power. Having situated Zhao villagers in a changing economic environment, I then move to discuss the enforcement of the birth control policy which is said to be the only existing government policy in the 1990s. I argue that the birth control policy cannot be carried out efficiently (i.e. from the government point of view), because both the village cadres and ordinary villagers are using a similar political strategy which differentiates people before political power is exercised. The majority of Zhao villagers can find their ways to avoid being punished for having more children than permitted. Social relationships are thus seen as crucial in seeking economic advantage and political alliances. In order to understand the nature of political control in the early 1990s, Chapter 7 also describes how a political campaign - the second socialist education campaign which took place in 1992 in Zhaojiahe - failed to reach any substantial end. I suggest that a new form of political control is under way but not yet fully established in areas such as Zhaojiahe.

* * *

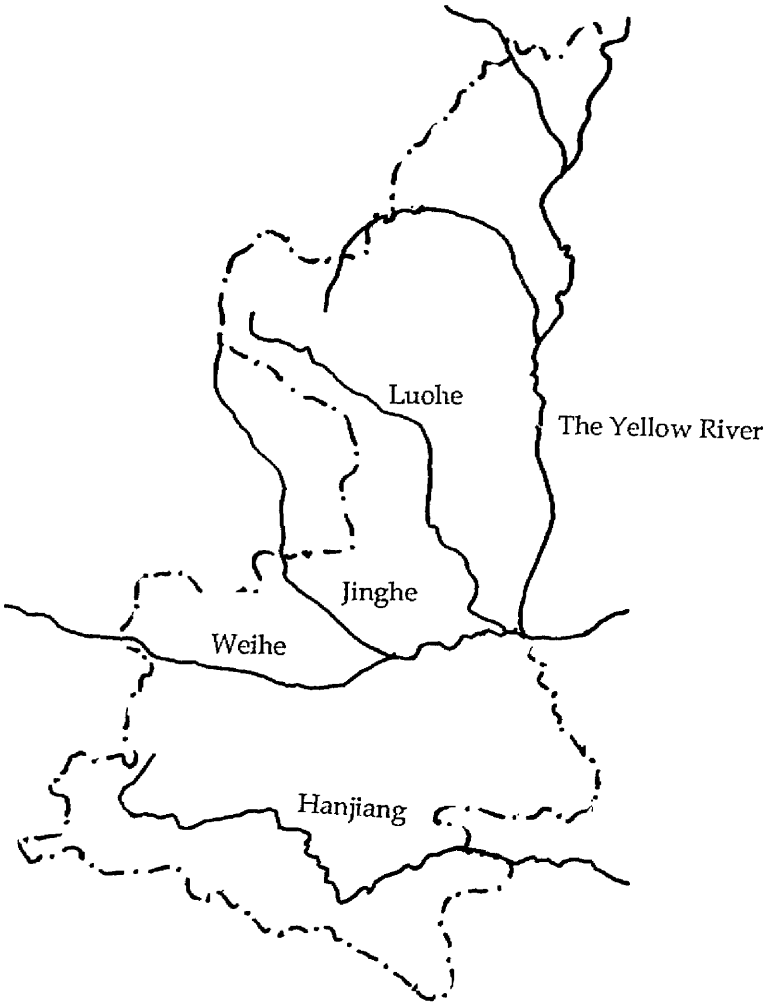
To return to our earlier discussion of the 'new ethnographic criticism', I feel we need to distinguish at least two kinds of 'localizing strategies'. While one kind are those that Zhao villagers adopt in daily life as practice according to the actual social and political situations, the other kind are those that anthropologists adopt in articulating their concerns and discussions of Chinese society. To follow Foucault and Bakhtin in a broad sense, I argue that both kinds of strategies are historically contingent and dialogically constituted. Although stressing the significance of practice of everyday life, let us not forget the potential danger of the inherent symptom of Malinowskian functionalist or Lévi-Straussian structuralist anthropology - the amnesia of history. Under no circumstance should one forget: practice was, is, and will always remain, historically situated. Let me quote Fredric Jameson to conclude this chapter:

> It is safest to grasp the concept of the postmodern as an attempt to think historically in an age that has forgotten how to think historically in the first place.

Map 2. Geographic Divisions of Shaanxi

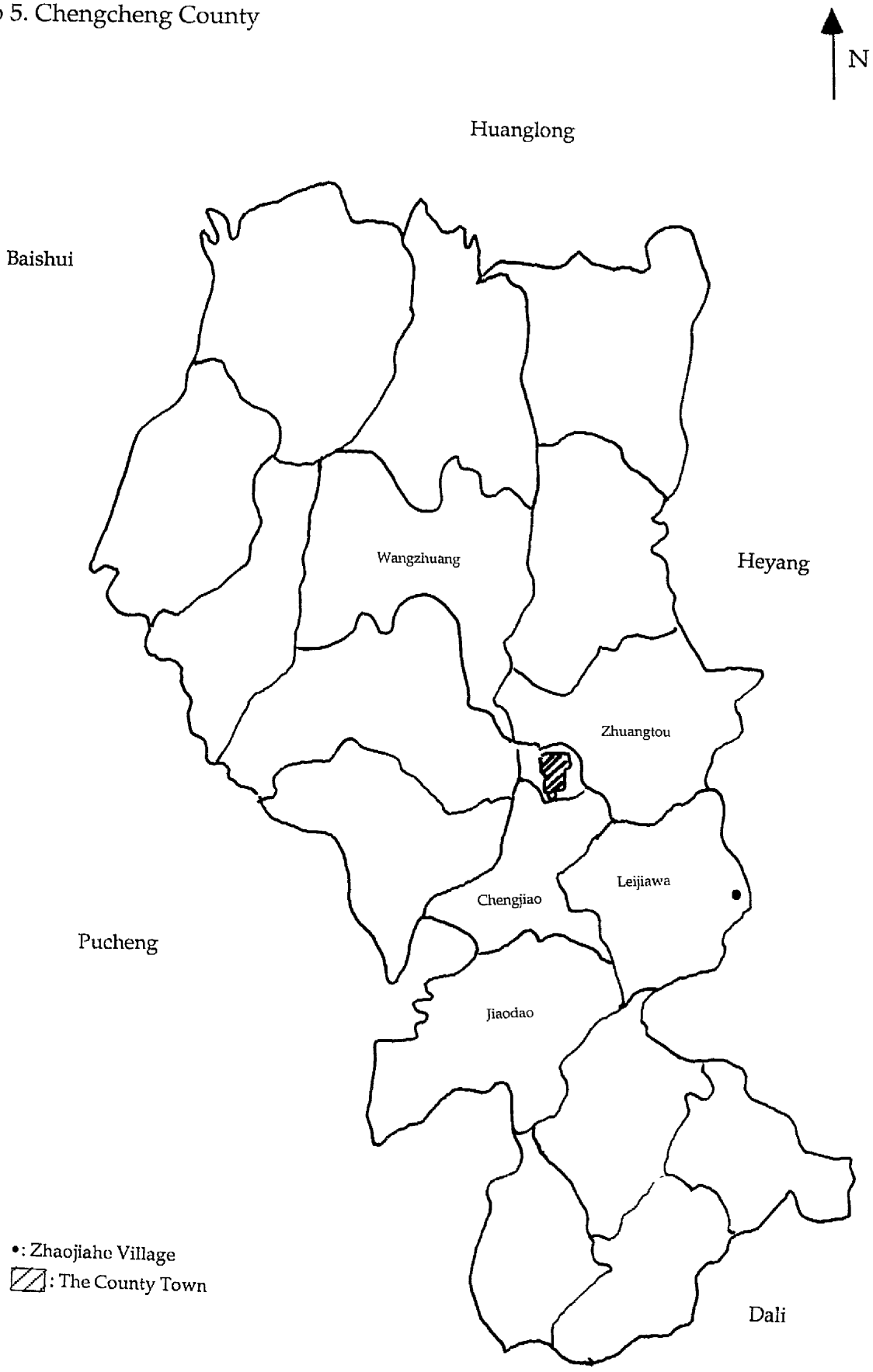


Map 3. Main Rivers of Shaanxi

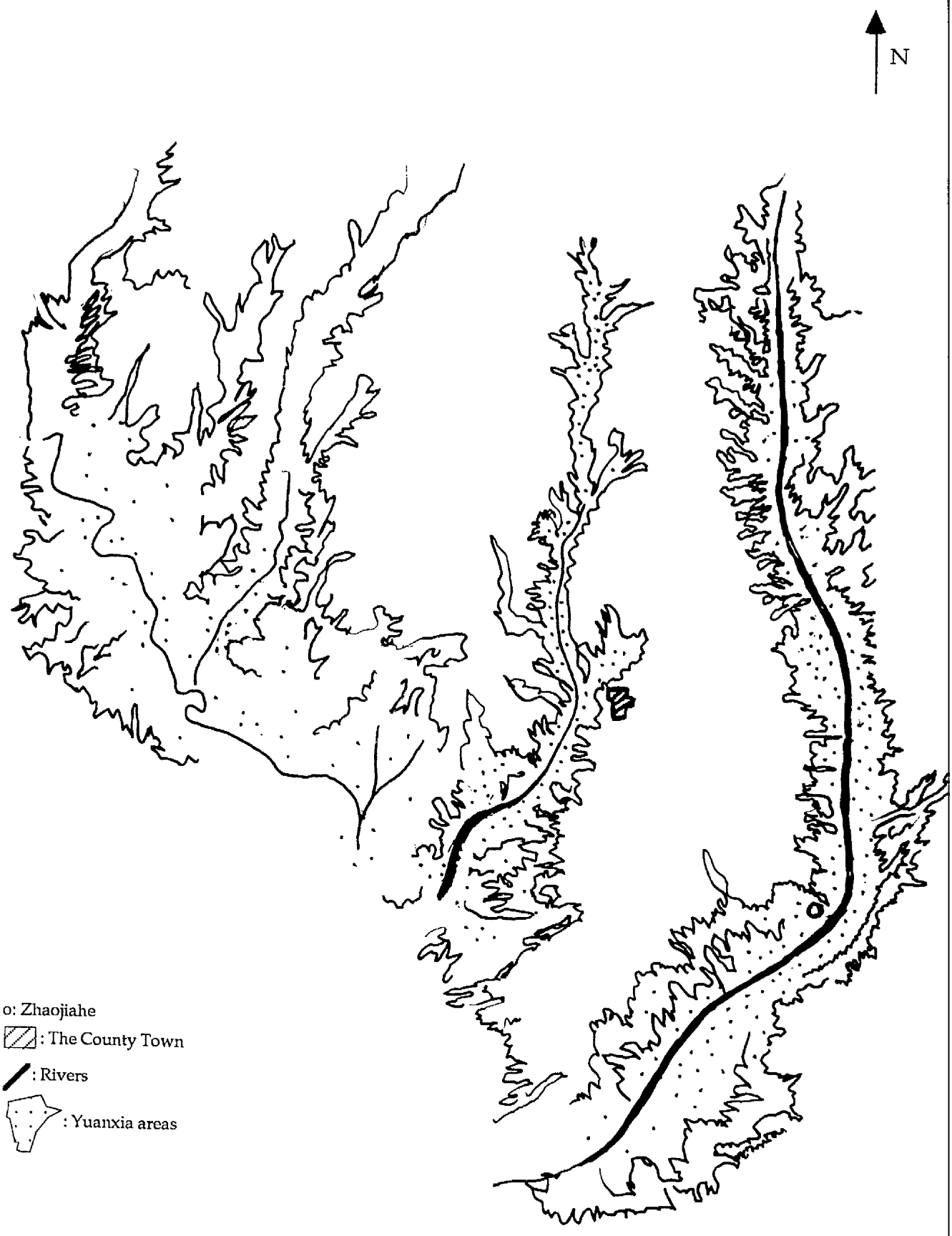


Map 4. Shaanxi and Its Neighbouring Provinces

Map 5. Chengcheng County



Map 6. The Topographic Feature of Chengcheng County



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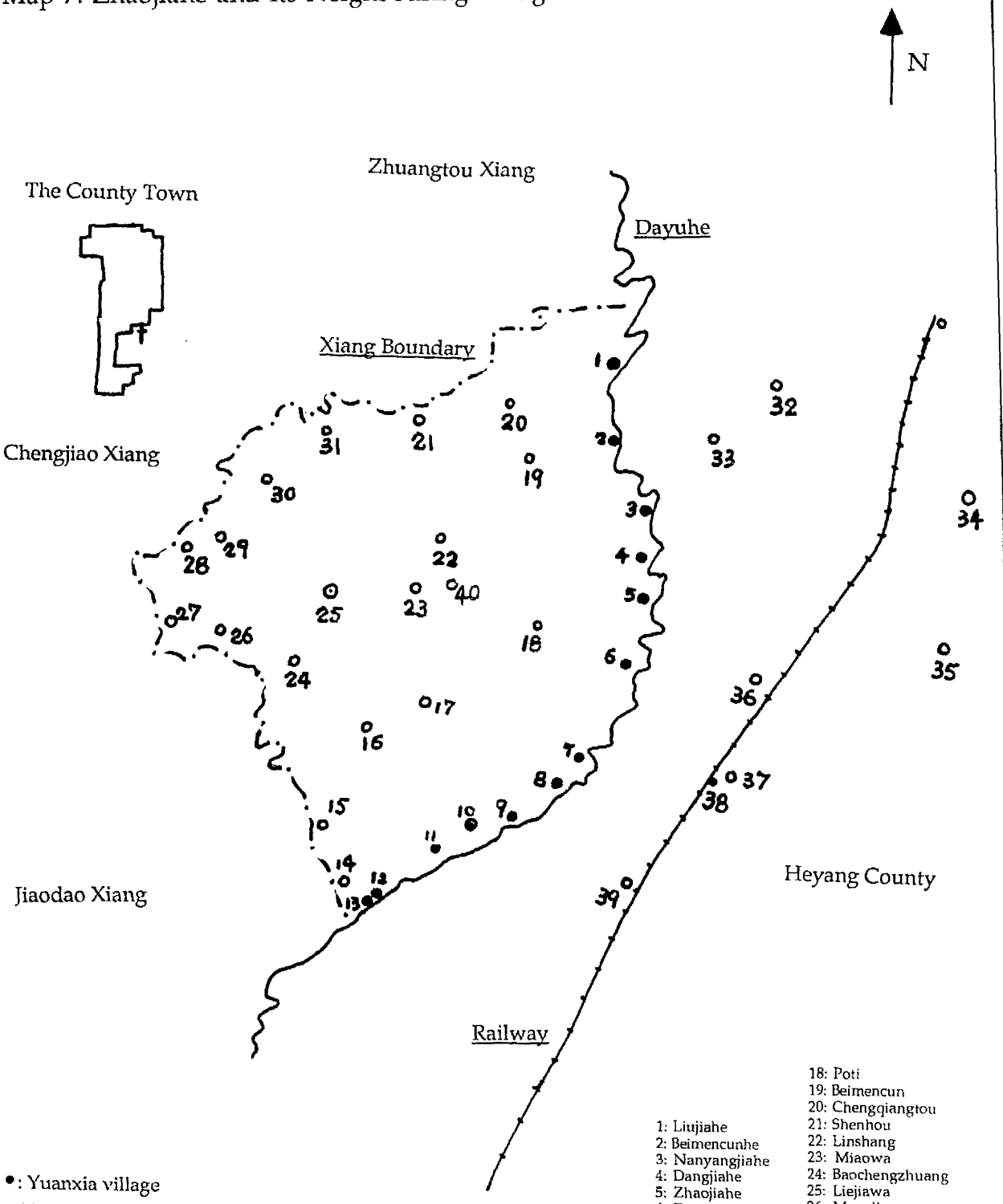
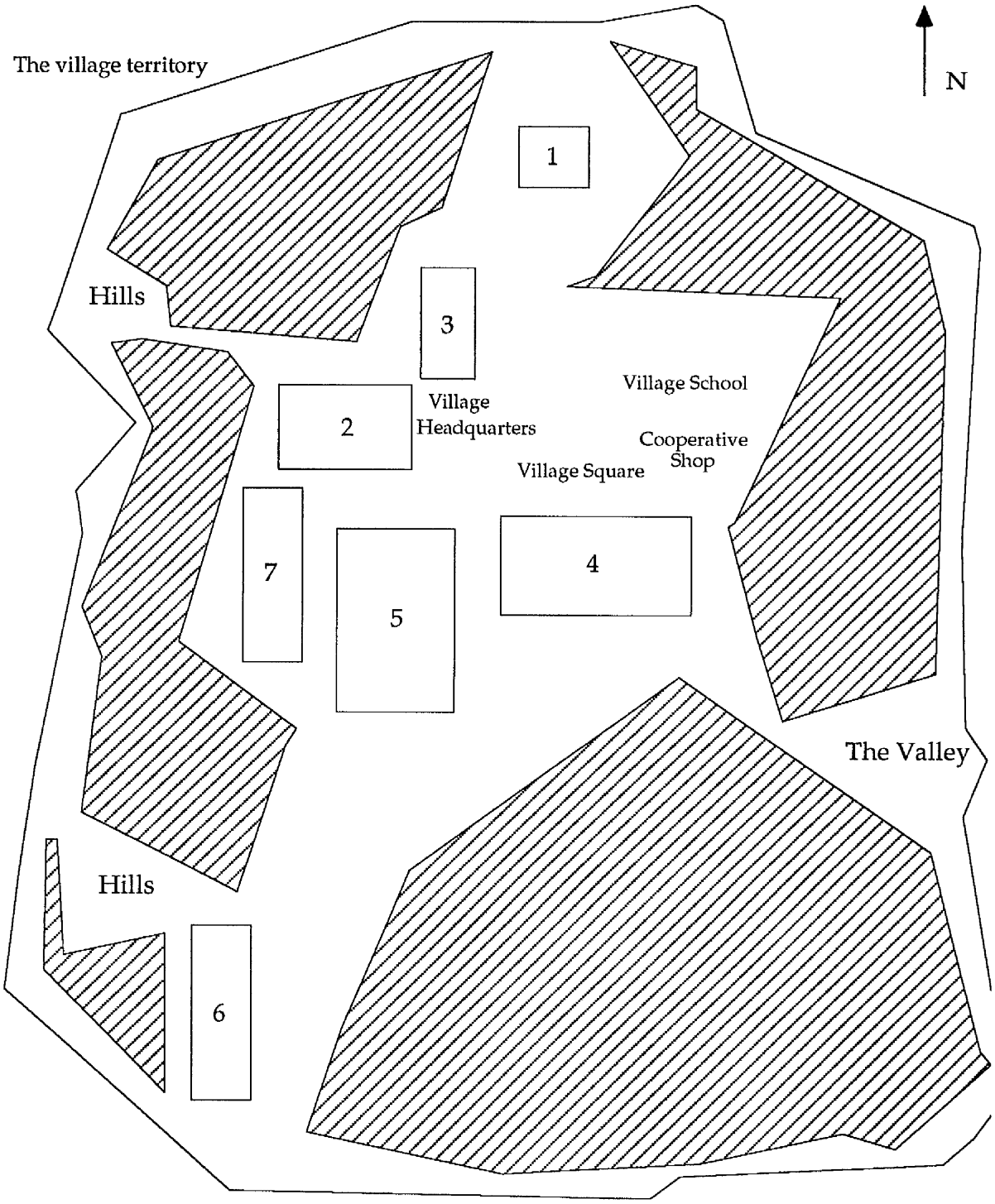
Map 7. Zhaojiahe and Its Neighbouring Villages



Map 8 Villager Groups



1 Houdi
2 Dongbang
3 Xibang
4 Nanjian
5 Xinzhuang
6 Dawa
7 Dongbang

Chapter 1 The Village and Villagers

Introduction

A cornerstone in Chinese communist history, the Third Plenum of the Central Committee of the CCP (the Chinese Communist Party) took place in 1978, two years later after Mao Zedong's death. With Deng Xiaoping's return to central power, economic reforms were introduced in China from the late 1970s onwards. In the vast rural areas of mainland China, 'the agricultural responsibility system' of production soon replaced the well-known 'work point system' of the people's communes. The core of 'the agricultural responsibility system' was the reconstitution of the Chinese peasant family as the production unit. After almost three decades of collectivised agriculture in the form of people's communes, the household once again became the primary organiser of production. That is, land was redistributed or, precisely, contracted in long term leases to each household. Other commune or village assets were similarly redistributed, rented or sold to peasants, and by the mid-1980s most rural families were operating in a political economy where the local agents of state authority had less control over labour and land than at any time since the land reform in the 1950s.[1]

What are the social implications of this process of decollectivization? Helen Siu has raised a question that represents the inquiries of many others:

> Have traditional cultural assumptions survived the encounter with the Maoist revolution to come back full circle in the 1980s? Or have processes of modern state-making and nation-building transformed rural society to the extent that what we observe today are mere fragments of tradition reconstituted for coping with contemporary existence ... ? (1989: 1)

In this line of questioning, rural China is examined in terms of the effects and processes of collectivisation and decollectivization which have shaped much of the contemporary history of mainland China. Scholars working on China also see the urgency of ethnographic research on post-Mao China and potential difficulties in carrying out their research in the way they used to do. As Whyte made it more clear:

> In the wake of the demise of the familiar and fairly standardised pattern represented by people's communes, many questions arose for debate. How much of the collective system remained in rural China after decollectivization? To what extent did the revived system of family farming represent a return to pre-socialist organisational pattern, or was any general resemblance to the past superficial and misleading? Was there a general pattern of village organisation across the nation in the wake of decollectivization, or had uniformity completely given way to local peculiarities? (1992: 317)

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[1]For detailed discussions and different interpretations of this process, see for instance Riskin 1987: 284-315; Gittings 1990: 127-149; Howard 1988; Nee and Su 1990; Potter and Potter, 1990: 158-79; Hinton, 1990; Siu, 1989: 273-90; Shue, 1988: esp. 148-52; Croll 1988. For a provincial account of Shaanxi, see Vermeer 1988: 310-321.

Local peculiarities, either taken as a fact or a judgement, indicates a tendency that rural China, after more than a decade of the economic reforms, has become differentiated in socio-economic terms. In recent years, scholars both inside and outside mainland China, have turned their attention to the problem of socio-economic stratification and its consequences in rural China.[2] Some scholars take the issue of socio-economic stratification in rural China as an emerging new sociological phenomenon and look at how it is structured in different regions as part of the necessary conditions for macro-economic development (e.g. Lu et al. 1992; Lu 1992); while others focus on the internal conflicts between people from different strata and look at the historical conditions in which the new form of social stratification emerged (e.g. Yan 1992). Both approaches, in different ways, point to the contingent historical condition of the post-reform rural China, under which my field research is undertaken.

* * *

In recent years, anthropologists have argued that the functionalist notion of 'village', taken as island-like, isolated communities, was an invention rather than a fact (e.g. Boon 1982: 14-16) and the notion of 'local' is often constructed for specific purposes in articulating certain kinds of power relations (Asad 1993: 1-13). Based on this understanding, I see my field site - Zhaojiahe - as being located, in relation to the wider transformational forces taking place in rural China, as part of the very process of social change, though this does not prevent me from presenting Zhao villagers' view of their own village. Zhao villagers, after more than a decade of household production, have developed a strong sense of group identity which, in my view, derived from their dissatisfaction with the present status of the society. Zhao villagers complained about how they were being forgotten by the government. In economic terms, Zhaojiahe is neither a highly developed village nor a 'poor-difficult' *('pin-kun-cun')*[3] village which cannot supply itself with daily maintenance. Zhaojiahe is a village that does not attract any kind of official attention. However, this is how I see the significance of choosing Zhaojiahe as a focus of field research. Although Zhao villagers are less likely to be addressed by or included in the official discourse, either as good or bad examples, they are not less active in commenting upon the process of change. In my view, their view is a constituent part of the very process of China's transformation. It is in this sense that I use the notion 'Zhao villagers' to mean a specific kind of agent which is produced by and produces the conditions of the economic reforms.

* * *

My journey to the village, which provides a clue to the experiences that I had later in my fieldwork, will be the starting point of this chapter. Then I shall move to a discussion of the notion of 'Zhao villagers', which is more often employed by themselves in the form of 'our Zhaojiahe', followed by a brief inspection of the village genealogy. In this chapter, I shall also have a brief introduction to the village economy, administration, population and the

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[2]For an introduction, see Walder 1989, and also Yan 1992.

[3]*'Pin-kun-cun'* or *'pin-kun-hu'* are two official classificatory categories which indicate respectively 'poor and difficult (in daily living) village' and 'poor and difficult household'. Since the 1980s, as part of the reform project, different levels of local governments have been instructed by their superiors to pay attention to the poor and difficult villages or households, to try to help improve their living standards.

neighbouring villages. These discussions help us understand how Zhao villagers are viewed and represented by both themselves and others such as local officials, neighbouring villagers and, in addition, the ethnographer.

A central theme of this chapter is that of social change. Zhao villagers are very critical of the economic reforms and praise the Maoist past. To Zhao villagers, nothing seems to be more pleasant than the period of the people's communes. Although there was an unprecedented increase in household income in the village in the 1980s, Zhao villagers rejected the view that the increase was a result of the instalment of the new policies institutionalised by the economic reforms. This raises an interesting question about indigenous interpretation and explanation. To look carefully at the way in which Zhao villagers explain, interpret and comment on their own action and practice will be one of the main concerns through the whole thesis. We also need to ask the question: what is the ground on which we are able to situate Zhao villagers' articulation and representation? Following the recent theoretical development of 'a practice approach' in anthropology (Ortner 1984), I shall try to locate the discourse of Zhao villagers in their everyday practices, to focus on how Zhao villagers and their actions are producing, and are produced by, the conditions of the economic reforms, and to examine the process in which social action and its agents are mutually constituted in practice. I believe that a 'practice approach' will bring broader implications to Chinese studies in general.

1.1 The Yellow Earth

Zhaojiahe village, under the management of Chengcheng County and 1530 kilometres south-west of Beijing, is situated on a valley hill of Shaanxi Province in north-west China (see Map 1). My train from Xi'an, the provincial capital, travelled more than five hours and arrived at Qifeng station - a small village five kilometres away from my destination - in the late afternoon. I came across three young people - two men and one woman - who worked in Xi'an and were going back to the village to visit their parents. This was three weeks before the Chinese New Year in 1992. Walking away from the station with my new friends, I immediately breathed the earth - the yellow earth. I was bewildered by the topographic complexity of the area: up and down along little, twisted, sometimes even dangerous, dirt roads, often with two or three inches of dust on their surface. It was a dry winter. Carrying my two heavy suitcases containing photocopies of classic ethnography ranging from Malinowski's Argonauts of the Western Pacific and Evans-Pritchard's The Nuer to Fei's Peasant Life in China and Chan, Madsen and Unger's Chen Village, which I thought I would need in the field, made me pant and sweat while my shoes were buried in the yellow powder of dirt - a feeling of something rather fresh and exciting. The excitement gradually slid into a mixture of expectation and desperation, wishing we could reach the village before it became dark. It seemed to be an endless journey, although, as I was later told, it was only about four or five kilometres between the station and the village.

I started to talk to my companions by mentioning the dust, which rose up to our knees, saying that it was like walking on sliced sponge. Jianhui, a post-graduate who had recently

started to work in a company in Xi'an and had his family in Zhaojiahe, responded calmly but startlingly: "those mountain people are dead-brains *(si-nao-jin)*, they do not know how to build roads, very backward *(luohou)*." I was amazed by his usage of "those" - instead of 'these' - which excluded himself, since from the very beginning when I met them I took them as people who belonged to Zhaojiahe. We started to chat and Jianhui then asked me why I had come there - if I did not have a relative to visit. This reminded me of my embarrassment a month ago when I was trying to explain what anthropology was to a local official in a Beijing suburb.[4] So I tried to be as vague as possible by saying that I wanted to have a look at rural life and to do some 'social survey' *(shehui diaocha)*. The woman, who did not seem to have had any interest in our conversation so far, suddenly burst in: "what the hell is worth surveying in this poor *shangou* (literally 'between mountains')?" She then remained silent for the rest of the journey. Jianhui and the other young man continued to talk to me and, somehow, trying to verify the woman's claim, turned to tell me that there was a marriage crisis in Zhaojiahe. Zhaojiahe is a single surname village, and has so far practised patrilocal residence and virilocal marriage. But young men are nowadays facing increasing difficulties in finding brides from other villages, especially from *yuanshang* villages. The term *yuanshang* is part of a social classification of geographic locations made by the villagers to indicate those who live on flat areas. Girls in Zhaojiahe want to move away from the village through marriage on the one hand and fewer boys from other villages want to settle in Zhaojiahe on the other. As they said, the single surname rule which used to prohibit marriage within the village was breached because of the difficulty of recruiting brides from other villages. Jianhui made a startling comment: "in the future, Zhaojiahe will become a village of fools *(dai-sha)* because close kin get married with each other".

This pessimistic introduction to the village was reinforced by a criticism of the present situation of both the society and the village given by my first host, Wanbin, in the second evening after I settled in Dawa - one of seven 'villager groups' *(zu)* of Zhaojiahe. Just after dark Wanbin slid into my room quietly and talked to me at length in a low voice:

The present society is wholly rancid *(xianjin zhe shehui manhala)*. The reform is no better than the 'big iron bowl'. Now it is 'economic management' *(jinji guanli)*. Everything is money. Money is the head-rope of a fishing net *(yi-qian-wei-gang)*. It does not work. It is by no means better than the administrative management *(xingzheng guanli)* in the past. Why? Because economic management does not touch people's thought *(sixiang)*. Doing bad things nowadays leads just to a fine. A fine is nothing and people still do bad things. During Mao's time *(Mao zhuxi neihui)*, no money was required, you went to mass meetings to make a self-criticism if you had done something bad. People *(ren)* did not want to lose face, so there were few bad-doings. In the present society, everything is money. There are so many laws but none of them work. There was no law in the past but no one dared to steal or cheat. Nowadays *(xian-jin)*, peasants are always cheated. When Chairman Mao was dead, we all worried (about what would happen afterwards). Deng came out, everything turned out to be bad. Newspapers say there are always good harvests. They are inflated reports *(fu-kua-fen)*. In the past, during the period of people's communes, cadres tended to report less than what they had actually got in order to have more to be distributed to each household privately *(man-chan-si-fen)*. Now, the more you report, the more bonus you get from the government. The cadres now rely on the index-score system *(zhibiao zhi)*. In order to have high scores for themselves, the cadres report more

[4]For a discussion of how I found Zhaojiahe as my fieldwork location, see my Introduction, Section 3.

output than we have actually made. They all report more. It all depends on what they say and there is not even an accountant. There is no way to check. In the past, cadres were elected and chosen by the village masses. Now they are appointed by the Xiang government. They have a cadre-salary of thirty *yuan* each month. They care about nothing. Everything collective is collapsing, nobody cares. One looks after oneself *(ge gu ge)*. Who dared to curse the party and Chairman Mao in the past? Nowadays everybody swears at Deng. Who cares?

Later on when we knew each other better, Wanbin told me that he had thought that I was a journalist,[5] so he wanted to let me know the truth of the present situation in the rural area and what the villagers thought about it. He said that the villagers would not tell the 'truth' to the local officials and cadres and they would rather remain silent even if they were asked. This kind of silence should not be taken as an indication of acceptance. In my view, it is rather an action of resistance to certain kinds of local agents of the state.

The effective change of Deng's economic reforms occurred in Zhaojiahe in 1981, when land was redistributed to each household under the name of the 'agricultural responsibility system'. As everywhere else in rural China, Zhaojiahe used to be, together with another neighbouring village, a brigade of the Leijiawa People's Commune.[6] After land was redistributed, the economic operation has been almost entirely in the hands of each household and collective economic organisation and management, which had been dominant during the period of people's communes, were reduced to a minimum level, if not zero.

In Wanbin's talk, he repeatedly used two phrases, *Mao zhuxi neihui* (literally, 'Mao's time') and *xianjin* (literally, 'nowadays'). When talking to me, Wanbin used the term *xianjin* to refer to the period of economic reforms, that is, 'the present', and he heavily criticised the state of the present society. *Mao zhuxi neihui* was used in his speech as the past in order to make a comparison with the present. In Wanbin's criticism of the present, he shows a great deal of hostility towards 'economic management', since it makes people become money-oriented bad-doers. According to Wanbin, because people of the present society become bad, peasants start to suffer from thieves and cheating. This is, in turn, partially because the collective, that is the people's commune, collapsed. Nobody is in charge of looking after individuals. The village cadres are heavily criticised because they are corrupt.

Wanbin's view of the past and the present was shared by many other Zhao villagers, especially male adults. There was a kind of uneasiness about being a Zhao peasant in the early 1990s because it was said that peasants started to get cheated in the past ten years. As I was told, in comparison to 'Mao's time', nobody took peasants seriously during the period of the economic reforms. It was said that peasants, especially the poor and middle-lower peasants, had been highly respected during the period of people's communes. "But nowadays", as Wanbin once said, "everyone will and dares cheat peasants. If you go to the market, you will always get cheated. They sell the worst thing to you and ask you to pay more than others because you are a peasant! During Mao's time, who dared? Mass repression!" In the 1990s, a particular concern for

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[5]The term 'journalist', that is, *ji-zhe* in Chinese, bore a special connotation for Zhao villagers. This was largely due to the spread of a story about a journalist who had managed to make, through publishing a secret interview with villagers in a place near Xi'an, officials in higher positions know the 'truth' of how village cadres in that village were corrupt and get them to be punished in the end.

[6]Leijiawa is now a township of Chengcheng County, see Map. 5.

Zhao villagers was the problem of safety. Stories of robbery and theft were recurrently and widely reported by the villagers. One specific story, that I was told many times by different villagers when I was in the village, is worth recording here. It shows the fear and desperation of Zhao villagers towards thieves and how they can suddenly be turned into victims of inhuman others:

An old villager from a nearby village who planned to sell his donkey in a free market in the town knew there were many *zeiwazi* (literally, 'thief-babies') in that area. *Zeiwazi* would follow those who just made a transaction and steal the money from them. All transactions are conducted in cash. People have to carry cash with them, sometimes a large amount of money, to go to market. A good donkey in 1992 was worth about five hundred *yuan*, which was a small fortune for many families. The old man was very brave and careful. He found himself a big rope and brought it to the market. He wore a cotton-padded traditional black jacket and a self-made cloth shirt inside. After he sold the donkey, he immediately put his money underneath his shirt. For the sake of safety, he left his money close to his belly, and then tied himself tightly at waist with the rope. He told the others: 'I want to see how *zeiwazi* could reach my money', and walked away to enjoy himself. In front of the cinema, there was a crowd. When the old villager walked along the steps upward, a cigarette butt was thrown into his back through his collar. He was burnt and started to scream and had to open his rope in order to get rid of the cigarette butt burning his skin. People surrounded him and some helped. The old villager took off his jacket and shirt, throwing the butt away, and then, suddenly, he realised that his money had already gone. He started to cry.

Zhao villagers seemed to enjoy telling this story and the core message embedded in this story is that there was no sure way to escape from being robbed or cheated.

Another major concern with safety relates to farming. There were few households in Zhaojiahe growing vegetables. Zhao villagers had to go to the town to buy cabbages, carrots and so forth which were sold by villagers from the neighbouring villages. As for the question why they did not grow vegetables in Zhaojiahe, I was often told that vegetables would be stolen. It was true that, in summer, some villagers who grew watermelons had to sleep in their fields in order to protect their watermelons from being destroyed or stolen. This suggests that such blanket statements are rhetorical devices which hint at the less comfortable recognition that the danger comes from within the village. As Zhao villagers said, if everyone in the village grew vegetables, there would not be any problem. But, if only a few households did, their vegetables would certainly be stolen, or even destroyed. The fear of thieves also triggered the memory of the period of people's communes. "When was better?", once Wancheng, a young villager in his early thirties, said, "In Mao's time, if you left your hoe behind, you could certainly find it in the same place. Nobody would touch it. Where you left it, you would find it at the same spot. But nowadays, even if you keep your things carefully at home, they will still be stolen!" This became a mode in which to talk about 'history'.

To Zhao villagers, 'Mao's time' is a past of happiness. When talking about 'Mao's time', Zhao villagers seldom referred to different periods of this past such as the Land Reform, the Great Leap Forward, the three lean years or the Cultural Revolution. For instance, when I once asked whether there was any difficulty in the village during the three lean years (1960-1962) when there was a widely spread famine across the country, a middle aged villager

simply replied, "Oh, it was fine. There was shortage of food, but nobody died of starvation. It was difficult but there was food".

The period of liberation and land reform was less clearly remembered than a fierce battle which took place in the area in 1948 between the communists and the Guomindang troops. No villager was be able to tell exactly when Zhaojiahe was 'liberated' and no communist work-team was reported to have come to the village.[7] As I was told, there was no landlord in Zhaojiahe and, apart from one rich peasant and several middle peasants, all were classified as poor or lower-middle peasants during the land reform period.[8]

Zhao villagers instead remembered with pride and happiness that, when joining the Advanced Co-operatives in 1956, the most spectacular horse parade was theirs. All male Zhao villagers went to the county town to join the ceremony. However, when they were asked about the period of the Great Leap Forward, Zhao villagers laughed at the ideas then promoted. As Wanyou, an older villager in his late fifties, said:

> That was like a joke. Land was ploughed ten *chi* in depth and there were no day and night. Along each piece of lands was erected a little flag indicating that it belonged to a certain social group or organisation. Villagers were organised into women's association, the youth league and so forth. Anyway, it was a good harvest that year (1958) and everyone was allowed to eat as much as they wanted. Everyone took bread home and threw it away. It was a big waste. Afterwards, adult men were asked to go to other places to work on construction sites of roads and irrigation facilities. Women were left to work in the fields. We were told that small vases could be used underneath the eaves to grow sweet potatoes. Rain water dropping down from the eaves could help produce more than a hundred *jin* output in each vase. Isn't it funny?

When I asked Wanyou whether there were cooking woks or other iron domestic utensils destroyed or taken away for the steel production in household furnaces, he said: "No, no, who is that stupid? How can you cook if you take your cooking wok away?"[9]

When talking about 'Mao's time', the least likely topic in the villagers' daily conversation was that of the Cultural Revolution. I was only told that no red guards from big cities were sent to the village.[10] My question is not so much concerned with what had happened during the Cultural Revolution, it is really about why this period of the past seems to be by and large forgotten by Zhao villagers. Memories are historically constructed social practices. Hobart, among others, made it clear that the past is constantly reworked according to the contemporary frames of reference (1979: esp. 18-24). Furthermore, there could be more than one

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[7]For a description of how the communists 'liberated' poor peasants by uniting them to fight against bad landlords and other class enemies through the work-teams, see for instance Crook and Crook 1959, 1979: esp. 16-24, 25-35; Hinton 1966: esp. 243-316.

[8]The difficulty for the communists in this area of Shaanxi in making revolution in the land reform was that, by defending themselves, rich peasants and landlords either had secretly split their holdings of land among relatives or even had openly sold them before the communists came. See for instance Vermeer 1988: 296-300. For definitions of landlord and rich peasants, see Hinton 1966 Appendix C, 623-26. The result of class classification in the early 1950s in Chengcheng County was: middle peasants, 53.7%; poor peasants, 40.2%; landlords and other exploiting class, 5%; and the land holding of these three classes were respectively 56.30%, 30.75%, 7.90%, see *Chengcheng Xianzhi* 1991: 101.

[9]For an overview of the motivation and policy of the Great Leap Forward, see MacFarguhar 1983, and for a case study of this period, see Crook and Crook 1966.

[10]Unlike the case of Chen village, there is hardly any possibility of writing about Zhaojiahe through the memories of the villagers, since Zhao villagers showed little interests in discussing the past unless used as comparison with the present. For an interesting account of the Red Guards from big cities to a Guangdong village - Chen village, see Chan et. al. 1984: 103-140.

version of the past (e.g. Appadurai 1981). However, as Chan, Madsen and Unger showed in Chen village in south China, though versions of the past in memory were different, the villagers had one concern in common: "Chen Villagers is alike in the sense that both groups feel strongly that their own status is linked to the status of their native community" (1984: 16-17). What does the severe criticism of the present by Zhao villagers tell us? Does it show the fear that Zhaojiahe as a community is endangered? Is this danger particularly related to the dismantling of the people's communes? What are the present conditions of the village, such as matters of population, education, economic development, improvement of living standards and so forth? These questions I wish to address in this chapter.

Although 'Mao's time' was generally spoken of as a happy time, the memories of different individuals varied according to different situations. Once when we were served with sweet potatoes before a meal as a starter and I said that I liked them very much, Yin'ai, my host's wife in Dawa, commented upon this by saying that, "if I do not eat sweet potatoes for a while, I will miss them. But, if there are only sweet potatoes, I will hate them." Yin'ai's mother, sitting on the bed, then interrupted: "it was disastrous in the past since we had to eat them everyday, nothing else." After I asked, I knew that the past here referred to the period of people's communes during the Cultural Revolution. In order to reach higher production output, Zhao villagers, while working in brigades and production teams and following orders from the local officials, had to grow sweet potatoes rather than wheat. The output of wheat per *mu* was about 200-300 *jin* in the 1970s, while the output of sweet potatoes could reach more than one thousand *jin* per *mu*. The villagers could only get sweet potatoes for food in the end.

It was often women who broke the homogenous representation of a good 'Mao's time'. When talking about the Great Leap Forward, an old woman told me the story about the collective dining halls in the village, which were short-lived and controlled by the cadres. She criticised the village cadres by saying that they had taken the grain of the collective into their own courtyards. She said: "when we were starving, they (cadres) were eating bread. What a shame!" Among male adults, especially those over forty, there was an unanimous voice criticising the present. It seems to me that it was impossible for them to talk about 'Mao's time' differently, since 'Mao's time' was used in constructing a contrast to the present. For instance, once when an old villager in his late fifties, talked about the Cultural Revolution under my insistent questioning, he said: "well, it was indeed hard for them, the women. They had to leave their children at home, in bed, with a plank or a rope to hold the children. After women came home, they had to make meals. It was a difficult time for them." Repeatedly in this short remark on the Cultural Revolution is the term 'them' which points to an 'other'. Did not this villager experience any difficulty during the collectivisation period in terms of maintaining daily living or did he simply have to tell the difficulty through an 'other's experience?

A difference between male and female members of Zhaojiahe in the uses of the past ('Mao's time') is apparent. Representing the village as a whole, male adults of the village tended to overlook the difficulties of living conditions they had experienced in the recent past, since this recent past was made to construct a contrast to the present - the period of the economic

reforms. However, the women's view on 'Mao's time' not only shows that there exist different versions of memories of this past but also, more importantly, indicates the fact that different groups within the village may act differently according to different situations. This further invites the question of how the basic social groupings are formed, which is what I now turn to.

1.2 "Our Zhaojiahe"

Zhaojiahe is situated in a valley stretching from Huanglong Mountains in the north of the province to the Guanzhong Plain in the south. The village leans upon the western bank of the valley and houses are built like caves embedded on to hills. As a spectacular type of housing, which is characteristic of the area of northern Shaanxi, 'cave dwelling' is called *yao* in the local dialect. The village setting has been inlaid in such a delicate way that Zhaojiahe can hardly be noticed in a distance.

There is a constant small stream running from north to south at the bottom of the valley (see Map. 7). The village name 'Zhaojiahe', which consists of three Chinese characters, is linked to the stream. Respectively, 'Zhao' is a surname which is quite popular in China,[11] *jia* is 'family' and *he* is 'stream' or 'river'. To put them together, it is 'Zhao-family-river'. The stream is called Dayuhe ('Dayu River') which can be literally translated as the "Big Bathing River". However, as I was told, Zhao villagers used to take baths only twice in their whole life: once after birth and once before the wedding.[12] Nowadays, young people sometimes take baths in summer in order to cool themselves. The point is - bathing is not linked with body cleansing but rather with cooling. Women use the river as a washing pond. At the bottom of the valley, there are fields spreading out along the both sides of the river. These fields are called *shui-di* (literally, 'water land') which are able to be irrigated by means of application of small pumps extracting water from the stream. However, the proportion of irrigable land is less than one third of the village's whole amount of arable land. Terraced fields stretching out on hills are dependent on rainfall. As Zhao villagers often said, "What we eat depends upon the sky" *(kao tian chi fan).*

For daily uses of water, Zhao villagers rely upon wells. There is usually one well among one group of villagers who dwell together. In some cases, although there is more than one well for one group, the villagers still go to one well which they think to be the best. As in many other parts of China, Zhao villagers use the carrying pole to bring two buckets of water home from the well at one time. Every family owns a big water vat which can contain eight to ten buckets of water. These buckets are very heavy when they are filled with water. Only very strong women in Zhaojiahe can manage to bring water home, otherwise to bring water is always the task of men. Zhao villagers have been using wells for generations. Once, I asked a young

[11] In the popular booklet of Chinese surname, *Bai-jia-xing* ('A Hundred Chinese Surnames'), the surname Zhao is listed as the first one.

[12] I did not take a bath for six months when I was in the village. However, this seems to have less to do with water supplies than with habits. Bathing was completely out of one's consideration in daily life. I felt a little bit inconvenient for the first few weeks but, after a while, I myself was actually used to the life style. Everyone's door was always open and nobody would knock before he got in. There was no bathing facilities in the village, either public or private. No one would raise the question of how to take a bath. Its absence was part of a 'form of life'.

villager whether Zhao villagers would like to use tap water; to my surprise, he answered, "no, we don't. We can't have tap water. It is not because we do not have water but because, if we have tap water, people will waste lots of water. Just because bringing water to one's home is such a time and energy consuming activity, so people do not waste water".

It is worth noting that Zhao villagers are very much concerned with preserving what they have rather than trying to make more. They are concerned with distributing what they have rather than producing what they do not. It is evident that both the fear of theft and the idea of preservation of water derive from the same strategy of daily life.

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According to the official geographic description, Shaanxi province is often divided into three different zones: the northern loess plateau, the alluvial Weihe Plain (Guanzhong Plain) and the southern Shaanxi Plateau (see Map 2). There are clear differences among these three zones in terms of both climate and topographic features.[13] Among these three subdivisions, the south of the province is a mountainous area cut by Qinlin - a famous mountain which is often referred to as a dividing line between the south and the north of China. Some of the most famous Chinese dynasties in history, such as Qin, Han, Tang, established their political and economic centre in the Xi'an area. The alluvial plain, which is situated in the middle course of the province, is also one of the oldest agricultural areas in China, which is famous for its production of wheat and cotton. The Weihe Plain, which was called 'Guanzhong Plain' in Zhaojiahe, was often referred to by the villagers as *bai-cai-xin* (literally, 'the heart of a cabbage'). It may be worth noting that a cabbage is supposed to be eaten in the village leaf by leaf. Few families would finish a whole cabbage at once. Zhao villagers usually start to consume a cabbage by peeling some of its leaves and keep the rest in a vegetable cellar. The best part of the cabbage, that is 'the heart of a cabbage', is often left for the Chinese New Year's banquet.[14] This is how the Weihe Plain is metaphorized by Zhao villagers. There are plenty of rivers such as Weihe (Wei River) and Luohe (Luo River) flowing through the plain and these rivers have provided the main favourite condition for its long prosperity and development of agriculture (see Map 3). These rivers are main branches of the Yellow River which runs along the boundary between Shaanxi and Shanxi province (see Map 4).

In contrast to the plain where industries and cities are located, the northern Shaanxi plateau is rather poor or, in the official word, 'backward'. Yanan, the revolutionary resort of the communists in the 1930s and 1940s, is located on this mountainous area where there have been so far little industrial development. In 1992, when I was in the village, for the first time in history, travelling by train from Xi'an to Yanan was available. Chengcheng County lies between the northern mountainous area and the Weihe Plain. Two third of the county's topographic character traits are the same as that of the northern plateau, while the remaining one third is close to that of the plain. Four huge valleys stretching from the north to the south

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[13]For a thorough, authoritative description of the province's geographical division, see Dangdai Zhongguo de Shaanxi ('Shaanxi in Contemporary China') 1991: esp. 3-26.

[14]When writing about the preparations of food for the Chinese New Year's celebration in Taitou, Shandong Province, fifty years ago, M. C. Yang said, "The best parts of cabbages and pork are chopped together" in order to make dumplings. See Yang 1945: 37.

cut the county into three parallel plateaux (see Map 5 and 6). Villages are situated both on the plateaux and in the valleys. To the eastern edge of the county, Chengcheng and Heyang County are divided by Dayu Valley in which Zhaojiahe is situated.

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The region, where Zhaojiahe is located, is known as part of the loess plateau which is in turn often depicted as a piece of 'bad earth' in terms of its environmental conditions by western geographers. As Anderson once wrote about the area, that is, about the 'children of the yellow earth': "the most fatally incalculable factor of the seasons is the rainfall. Since reckless felling has destroyed the last remnants of the primeval forests, which by evidence of the Stone Age deposits, once covered the land, the treeless loess plain has become exceptionally sensitive to changes in rainfall. If the normal light rainfall falls, there is no reverse of moisture in the plateau, which is drained by innumerable ravines. If, on the other hand, the summer rains come with the violence of a cloudburst, as not infrequently happens, the ravines are widened with catastrophic rapidity. New miniature ravines are formed in a single night of rain, houses are threatened and roads diverted. Most feared is drought, which is synonymous with famine" (quoted in Tregear 1965: 213). Ravines of different sizes and different kinds can be seen everywhere in Zhaojiahe, and some of them are very deep and filled with garbage. Little dirt roads are often in danger of blockage after a summer rain and a huge ravine might appear in the middle of a road. As I was told, it sometimes happened that a donkey, commonly used as draught power, dropped into a ravine after rainfall and there was no way to get the donkey out of it. The donkey was therefore left in the ravine to die. As Tregear wrote about the topographic characteristic of the region, "an outstanding characteristic of the loess is its proneness to vertical cleavage, which results in the precipitous valleys and unique cliff landscape so typical of the area" (1965: 212).

However, despite that there is a great danger of pouring rains, Zhao villagers still pray for having more rains, particularly, in spring. Zhao villagers reported that there had been many droughts in recent years. A village proverb says, nine droughts come out of ten years *(shi-nian-jiu-han)*. It is because there are no irrigation facilities in the village and only a very small proportion of arable land can be irrigated by the stream; Zhao villagers always want to have more rains. In March 1992, when I was in the village, once there was a pouring rain for a whole day, which made every single village road become impossible to walk on. A tractor fell over when driving along the main village road. When I talked to an old villager in the evening about the rain, to my surprise, this villager said: "no, this is not enough. It will change nothing because it is too dry. We never have enough rainfall. No matter how pouring a rain is, it is always not enough".

The soil of the region is known as the loess. The whole region is covered by, as Shabad put it, 'a mantle of yellow wind-laid silt', which is generally thought to come from the Ordos Desert of Inner Mongolia. With respect to agriculture, Zhao villagers praised their own type of soil. In the mid 1970s, as I was told, there was a very severe drought and a shortage of grain in the village. Zhao villagers did not produce enough for themselves. The government then resold *(fan-xiao)* grain to Zhaojiahe to help them to survive. It was said that the wheat that Zhao

villagers received was actually imported from Canada. When I was talking with my host's family and other guests one day, Yin'ai, the wife of my host, said: "no, we did not like Canadian flour, because it was too crispy *(mei-jin)*. The steamed bread that we made with Canadian flour was not as nice as that made of our flour. Ours is much more sturdy." A senior villager then said, "you know why? The soil is different".

The significance of the soil concerns not only agriculture but also other aspects of village life. For instance, the loess plays a crucial role in house building. Before 1949, as old villagers recalled, most of houses in the village were simply caves dug into hills, which was called *tu-yao* (literally, 'the soiled or earthen cave dwelling'). Zhao villagers not only rely on the loess to provide grain to feed themselves but also depend on the soil as shelter. After the communists came to power in 1949, the housing conditions in the village have improved. Although the way in which houses are built remained the same, many villagers could afford to build *zhuan-yao* (literally, 'brick cave dwelling') nowadays. however, the bricks are still made by themselves from the loess-soil.

Each household is divided by heavy, plastered mud walls which can be as high as more than two or three metres. Mud which is used for building either houses or walls is taken anywhere - possible or convenient - from hills. Like air, the soil is free for every Zhao villager. In daily life there are many other aspects of uses of the soil. For instance, each household owns its own *maozi* ('toilet') which, like in many other parts of rural China, is simply a pit in the ground. After one finishes his use of the *maozi,* one is supposed to use a spade, which is always ready in a *maozi,* to cover his manure with some soil. It is fairly hygienic but, more importantly, the soiled manure could thus be used as the best fertiliser.[15]

Houses, land and roads are all built of the soil and intertwined with each other. The impression that I had when I got into the village for the first time was that it was a 'world of soil'. Land can be divided into five basic categories in the village: cultivable land, uncultivable land, dwelling area, road and squares. Little uncultivable land is left. Pieces of newly cultivated land can be as small as five square metres on the top of little hills, on which even a donkey is not able to turn around. Most of the village's lands are terraced fields stretching along both sides of the valley. Zhao villagers do not own any piece of land on the plateau. There are two kinds of dirt roads: those connecting dwelling areas among groups or leading to the town and other villages; and those leading to fields. The main village roads are wider than those leading to the fields which can be too narrow for two persons to pass at one time. Dwelling areas tend to be clustered in rows. Household courtyards are built like castles with thick, high mud enclosing walls. Small paths among households are naturally made between these thick walls. The main public use of space is the village square which lies at the centre of the main village where collective activities such as village markets, the travelling cinema, funeral or wedding receptions take place (see Map. 8). An open space in the middle is surrounded by the

[15]Earlier, Fei pointed out the significance of soil *(tu)* in Chinese rural communities: "We often say that country people are figuratively as well as literally 'soiled' *(tuqi)*. Although this label may seem disrespectful, the character meaning 'soil' *(tu)* is appropriately used here. Country people cannot do without the soil because their very livelihood is based upon it" (1992: 37). However, Fei stressed the importance of farming which gave rise to the cherish of the soil. In the case of Zhaojiahe, for instance, the aspect of house-building seems to be at least as important as farming.

village headquarters, the village school and a shop which had been set up during the Co-operative Movement in the mid 1950s and was contracted to individuals in 1984. Since the early 1980s, the village headquarters were seldom used, while, in the Maoist era, it had been the centre of political gatherings for endless meetings and study sessions.

Two main village roads lead to the county town which lies in the north-west of Zhaojiahe. Around Chengcheng County, there are good- quality tar-paved roads which have not yet stretched down to the valley. On the other side of Dayu River, that is, to the east of Zhaojiahe, it is Heyang County on the plateau on which a railway is built. In comparison to the northern mountainous areas, travelling is not difficult from Zhaojiahe. There are two regular trains each day going to Xi'an from a nearby station - Qifeng (see Map 7). It takes about five (the fast train) or seven (the slow train) hours to go from Qifeng to Xi'an, the capital of the province. Tickets were about seven to ten *yuan* in 1992.

Few villagers reported that they had ever been to Xi'an. Except for visiting the neighbouring villages, few from Zhaojiahe travelled further than the county town which is about twenty five to thirty *li* away. An old woman told me that she had not even ever visited the county town. Young people go to the town, either visiting the town market or for other purposes such as seeking entertainment. However, travelling beyond the county town is still rare and will be taken as something significant. For instance, out of five young village school teachers there was only one who had once been to Xi'an for the purpose of purchasing teaching instruments for the school. The other four teachers who were in their twenties never tried to visit the capital of the province. When I asked the question why they did not try to go to the city to have a look, one female teacher said that her father did not let her go anywhere since it was not safe. A male teacher said to me, "there is nothing that I need to do in Xi'an, so what is the point of going there? I have no relatives to visit there. If I have something to do, I may go. Otherwise, You waste your money. We do not want to go there doing nothing".

Travelling is linked to the idea of doing 'proper things'. As we may have noticed, the notion of 'waste' is again involved in articulating the necessity of travelling. It is evident that the fear of theft, the idea about preservation of water and travelling are all organised around the notion of 'waste'. As a strategy of daily life, Zhao villagers are first of all concerned about their resources not being wasted. To visit one's relatives is one of the proper doings. Because most of their relatives also live in the neighbouring villages, Zhao villagers often travel on foot or by bicycle. The main means of transportation is bicycle. Since Zhaojiahe lies in the valley and roads are laid out along hills, one often has to carry his bicycle to climb up hills before riding it.

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The problem of travelling raises the question of how Zhao villagers talk about their own village and about other places. When talking about Zhaojiahe, the villagers do not simply say the name of the village. Instead they always add a pronoun to the village name, that is, *'our* Zhaojiahe' *(wo Zhaojiahe).* In other words, a place has to be talked about in connection with personal pronouns. One day, not long after my arrival in the village, when I was talking to Wenxia, the health worker of the village, she kept saying: "*Your* Beijing is

much better than *our* Zhaojiahe, I went with my mother to *your* Beijing several years ago. *Your* Beijing was so good. I went to *your* Beijing to have an operation. I will go to *your* Beijing again very soon." I was quite embarrassed since I did not know how to reply. She did not say 'your Beijing *people*', a usage which is not unpopular in other parts of China, but simply 'your Beijing' which sounded quite unusual because a place was mentioned in direct association with a personal pronoun. Wenxia might have intended to be polite to me by indicating that I came from a better place (as she thought). To Zhao villagers, persons are always related to where they belong. To put it simply, space is personalised or particularised.

The way in which the village names in the area are given clearly shows that geographic locations are associated with rights of settlement. For instance, along Dayu River there is a very similar pattern of naming the villages. Like that of Zhaojiahe, many other villages are named as 'X's family river', such as Dang-jia-he, Yang-jia-he, Liu-jia-he, Hou-jia-he, and so on. Among all villages on the western side of the river and within the boundary of Leijiawa township, eleven out of thirteen villages have been named in the same way (see Map 7). If people are made to be associated with places they live, will perceptions of different places affect the villagers' view of social and economic differentiation among peoples living in different places? Zhao villagers talked about 'our Zhaojiahe' in a quite negative tone when I was in the village. As an old villager once said to me, "*our* Zhaojiahe is declining *(bu-xing)*. People do not want to stay in *our* Zhaojiahe any longer. There is nothing getting better nowadays in *our* Zhaojiahe. Our sons could not find brides from other villages. Those who have connections in the town have already moved their families to the town. *Our* Zhaojiahe will be dead *(wan-le)* in the future". As a matter of fact, many Zhao villagers were making efforts to move away from Zhaojiahe in the early 1990s. Those who had official connections or relatives in the town tried to move to live in the county town.

To young villagers, if their families have no connections with local officials, there are two other ways to leave the village. One is to go to colleges and universities outside the county by means of passing national exams and the other is to join the army. Those who managed to go to universities would never return to the village, though few were successful. While, for those who joined the army, unless they got promotion in the army, they might be in the end sent back to the village. Even though, as I was told, to join the army one needed to pay a bribe to the local soldier-recruitment officials. The amount of money needed for bribery in the early 1990s, as a villager said, was between one and two thousands *yuan*, which was a huge amount of money for the villagers.[16]

Underlying this negative representation of Zhaojiahe by the villagers themselves, there is a question of how Chinese villagers, more often termed as peasants, have generally been viewed by the government during the period of the economic reforms. A large-scale social and economic survey made by Shaanxi provincial government - 'Shaanxi Rural Social and Economic Survey' - took place from 1985 to 1986, and a volume of analyses bearing the same title appeared in 1986. In this volume, it was said that Shaanxi villages in general were

[16]The average annual peasant income per capita in Chengcheng County in 1990 was about four hundred *yuan*, see Section 1.4.

characteristic of 'conservatism' *(bao-shou-xing)*, 'narrow-mindness' *(xia-ai-xing)* and 'self-sealedness' *(feng-bi-xing)*. Good peasants are said to be those who are 'brave' and dare to engage in non-agricultural production and activities, otherwise peasants are said to be 'backward' and lack encouragement to explore economic opportunities. The notion of 'village' or 'villagers' was made to construe a 'backwardness'.[17]

It was not a coincidence that Zhao villagers were highly aware of their being 'peasants' in the early 1990s. If something happened to them, which they did not like, Zhao villagers often turned to explain these happenings in terms of discrimination towards peasants. For example, when Wanbin's (my first host) daughter graduated from a local nursing school, the family wanted her to stay and work in a county town hospital in Chengcheng. Since graduates ought to be assigned by the local government to different clinics and individuals were left little choice, Wanbin brought wines and cigarettes and went to visit the local government officials. He was ignored for reasons that could not be known. However, when Wanbin told his story to others, he insisted that nobody wanted to talk to him because he was a peasant. Wanbin's daughter had gone to a township clinic in Wanzhuang in the end, which was not far away from Zhaojiahe. This was talked about by Wanbin's family as a failure since she did not manage to stay in the hospital in Chengcheng. "This is because we are peasants", Wanbin explained to me. Peasantry was thought by Zhao villagers to be in association with weakness and hopelessness. On the other hand, Zhao villagers insisted that this would never have happened in the period of the people's communes. They argued that there had been a much greater equality between the rural and the urban during 'Mao's time'.

Zhao villagers also showed a great deal of interests in how other people thought about Zhaojiahe. When I was in the village, for instance, Zhao villagers - no matter young or old - often started talking to me by asking the question of *Ni kan wo zhe lan di fang za neng xiang* ("What do you think about *our* (this) 'poor' place")? The dictionary meaning of the Chinese term *lan* is 'sodden', 'mashed' or 'messy'. Facing this question, I often hesitated since I had to think about what they wanted me to say. There is a too clear judgmental presupposition in this question, but I was often not sure what Zhao villagers wanted to hear. I do not know what had happened during the period of the people's communes - did they also ask this question to strangers? Did they use the term *lan* to describe their own village? What I know is that, when talking about marriage, Zhao villagers often mentioned the period of the people's communes in a different tone, saying that brides were more willing to marry into Zhaojiahe then, because Zhao villagers used to produce more grain than other villages during the collectivisation period.[18] This suggests that the comparison is relativistic. Both the present and the past have to be judged in relation to living conditions of other people at a particular time. It is not only concerned with one's own present and past but also concerned with others' present and past. It is the relativistic position from which one sees oneself in the chain of changes. To Zhao villagers,

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[17]See 'Dui Cun de Sikao' ('Pondering on the notion of the village') in Shaanxi Sheng Shehui Jinji Diaocha, 1986: 284-297. In a more general theoretical framework, a Chinese scholar recently categorised the 'village-family-culture' in contemporary China as having eight character traits which sharply ran counter to the characteristics of western society, see H. N. Wang 1991: 22-9.

[18]Similar to the case of Chen village, in which Chen villagers used sweet potatoes to make exchange for brides during the Cultural Revolution, see Chan (et. al.) 1985: 29.

the development of a strong sense of 'our Zhaojiahe' is not a product of group solidarity but rather a feeling that there is no longer any kind of solidarity possible in the early 1990s. The use of notion of 'Our Zhaojiahe', in my view, is a means to stress the condition of a crisis of the village, which reflects a consciousness of the village's being marginalised in a fast changing society in the past decade.

1.3 Genealogy

Zhaojiahe is a single surname village with more than eight hundred people in 1992 and a common ancestor can be traced. According to the village genealogy, there have been in average twenty generations of settlement since the Zhao old ancestor *(lao-xian-ren)* came to Dayuhe from Luochuan - a place about two hundred kilometres north-east of the village. With an average estimate of twenty years per generation, people of the Zhao surname should have settled in the place for more than four hundred years. No villager in Zhaojiahe was able to recall the exact time when their old ancestor came to settle in the village. However, according to Chengcheng Xian Diming Zhi ('A Survey of Village Names of Chengcheng County'), Zhaojiahe was established as early as in the period of Jianlong Emperor, Song Dynasty, that is as early as in 960 AD (1984: 142). This rather suggests that the village history is longer than one thousand years. The difference might be due to the fact that, before the Zhao old ancestor came to settle in the village, there had been other people living in the same spot. A written genealogy has been kept in the village, though 'ancestral halls' *(jia-miao)* and 'tablets' were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution.[19]

During the pre-communist period, the hierarchical nature of traditional authority in rural Chinese communities was based upon their prevailing ideas of biological and physiological differences among individuals. Differences in terms of generation, age and sex determined the position that a villager stood in, either in a domestic group or in a larger kin group such as lineage organisation (e.g. Baker 1979: 5-25). This hierarchy not only shows how power was supposed to be distributed among individuals but also indicates the very basis of social classification in rural Chinese communities in the pre-communist period. In the case of Zhaojiahe, partially due to the fact that it is a single surname village, this classification based upon generation, age and sex still affects many aspects of daily life. I will have a brief look at how the village genealogy is talked about differently by women, elder men, young men.

In general, women showed little interest in the origin of the village and its genealogy.[20] It was often old male villagers who told me the story of the origin of the village, that is, how their old ancestor came to settle in Zhaojiahe. This is by no means astonishing, since the descent rule in Zhaojiahe is patrilineal and Zhao villagers have practised virilocal marriage for generations.[21] However, although women as a group in general were not interested

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[19] For a discussion of lineage and the political structure of northern villages in China before the communists came to power, see Duara 1988. For a discussion of characteristics of lineage organisation in north China, see also Cohen 1992.

[20] As wives, women have their natal surnames on the genealogy but no Zhao daughters are recorded.

[21] A full discussion of kinship and marriage will be given in the following two chapters.

in genealogy, individual women still held some curiosity about it. When I was working on Zhao genealogy one afternoon, some women came into the room where I was hand-copying the book. One of them bent over the square table on which I was working, looking at the old, thick book, and commented: "I heard of this (the genealogy) but never saw it before". Another woman behind me, after feeling the cover of Zhao genealogy, was amazed: "Oh, look at this, so thick and kept so well!" Another woman, who was slightly younger than the other two, leaning on the door, said: "It is kept well but what is the genealogy for? It is no use". Wangcai, a male villager in his early thirties who had helped me to get hold of the genealogy, interrupted: "Genealogy records kinship grades. How can you say that it is useless?" The woman near the door then said: "Well, I call Dongqi's mother *wu-niang* ('the fifth mother') but my daughter calls her *jie* ('sister'). You see?". When women talked about Zhao genealogy, they often insisted that it was of no practical use.

In the case of young male villagers in their twenties and thirties, the situation is slightly different. As individuals, young people in Zhaojiahe had completely no interests in Zhao genealogy, while, as a group, young generations had to consider sometimes their generation ranks. For instance, when I was working on the Zhao genealogy, none of those who were in their twenties and thirties even bothered to stop by or to try to have a glance at their genealogy, though most of them had never seen it before. In the early 1990s, genealogy was not kept as a secret and sacred book any longer, but, according to Wangcai who held Zhao genealogy, none of the young male members of the village had ever asked any question about it. However, what young male villagers did have to consider was how they should address the elderly. The difference between women and young male villagers in their attitudes towards genealogy is that women seem to be less concerned about generation ranks with regard to the village as a whole than young male villagers do. In other words, young male villagers have to consider the village as a whole kin group more than women do. As individuals, young male villagers have no interests in genealogy but, as a member of a group, they have to pay more attention to generational difference. But both young villagers and women are not concerned about the origin of the village and they never try to tell the story of their old ancestor. The generational consideration is by and large restricted to how one should address others.

Elder men, especially those who are over fifty, are willing to tell the story about the origin of the village, although many of them could not remember their own generation grades correctly. Elder men are most explicitly concerned about how they should be addressed. For instance, an old villager once said to me: "Wanhe's[22] son-in-law was so wonderful that he made me jealous. When he came to see us, I just wished I could have had a son-in-law like him. His mouth was like full of honey. He came to the village addressing everyone in such a proper way! For those he should call *ya* ('grandfather'), he never failed; for those he should call *bei* ('the elder brother of one's father'), he never missed. Such a good boy!" Under this circumstance, young male members of the village have to somehow pay attention to how they should call their senior folks among the villagers. However, generation and age do not always coincide. A

[22]Wanhe is his father's brother's son.

high generation grade does not always go together with seniority in age. To address others properly also involves elements beyond generation and age. Economic power, prestige and political significance all count in the way in which one person is supposed to be addressed on particular occasions. For example, when discussing what was the proper behaviour, Famin, in his mid thirties, once said: "According to generation grades, Jiacang should call me *shu* ('younger brother of one's father'). But because he is older than I, I often call him *ge* ('brother')."

As we can see from the above discussion, with respect to genealogy, there are different attitudes among different groups in Zhaojiahe. These groups may indicate a framework of the traditional structure of the village organisation. To what extent does it still have its effects? How do the economic reforms make impacts on this structure and what are the consequences and implications of the decollectivization process on conventional kinship? To what extent does kinship still provide a frame of reference for social action? These questions will be explored in the following chapters.

1.4 Administration and Economy

As in other parts of China and as shown in Chengcheng Xianzhi ('The Records of Chengcheng County'), the official administrative system has changed since the early 1980s. The following table shows the change:

The People's Commune System		'Responsibility' System	
Province	(Sheng)	Province	(Sheng)
County	(Xian)	County	(Xian)
People's Commune	(Remin Gongshe)	Township	(Xiang)
(Grand) Brigade	(Dadui)	Village	(Cun)
Production Team	(Xiaodui)	Groups	(Zu)

Under the new administrative system, which was often referred to by Zhao villagers as the 'responsibility' system *(ze-ren-zhi)*, there are two types of Cun (village): the administrative Cun *(xing-zheng-cun)* and the natural Cun *(zi-ran-cun)*. A natural village is mainly defined by territorial occupation, while an administrative village usually consists of several natural villages. A natural village may in turn be divided into several 'villager groups' *(cun-min-xiao-zu)* which parallel to the definition of the production team of the people's communes. As one of the nineteen administrative villages in Leijiawa Xiang (township), Zhaojiahe consists of three natural villages and seven villager groups (see Map 8).

Although there was a village committee as well as a party branch acting as the administrative team when I was in the village, Zhao villagers refuted the view that Zhaojiahe as a whole functioned in any sense. As they often said, "Our Zhaojiahe is like a plate of sands *(yi-pan-san-sha)*". Their complaints first of all pointed to the lack of any kind of corporate activities in the village. Many ordinary villagers blamed the village cadres for

being corrupt and irresponsible. Although each villager group had its own group head but, when Zhao villagers used the term *gan-pu* ('cadres'),[23] they meant those who were members of either the village committee or the party branch. According to Zhao villagers, except for carrying out the population control policy for the government, the village cadres were doing nothing for the village. It is evident that the degree of political control in Zhaojiahe is by no means comparable to that during the period of people's communes.

There are three different ways of referring to the seven villager groups in Zhaojiahe, which in a way shows the historical change in terms of political and economic organisations. Since the 1980s, the seven villager groups have been officially given the name *cun-min-xiao-zu* ('villager group') or, simply, *zu* ('group'). These seven 'groups' used to be called *xiao-dui* ('production team') or, simply, *dui* ('team') during the period of the people's communes. Except for these two official names, each 'group' also has a geographic name, which is based on relative locations of these groups (see Table 1). The geographic names of each group are inherited from the pre-communist era. When I was in the village, apart from *zu*, the other two names were often interchangeably used, though *dui* was more likely to be used when discussing the group as a whole, especially when it was concerned with economic or political issues. When talking about individual households concerning family matters and the like, the geographic name was often employed in the village.

Each group has its own conventional territory of dwelling sites as well as its own conventional territory of land. Five groups, that is, Dongbang, Xibang, Nanjian and Xinzhuang, either adjacent or next to each other, constitute the main village *(da-cun)*, and both village headquarters and the school are located in the centre of the main village (see Map 8). Houdi, group one, and Dawa, group six, are separate from the main village. Dawa, where I stayed for more than three months, is about one and a half kilometres away from the main village, though all Dawa villagers originally came from the main village. Dawa is both a natural village and a villager group. Houdi is about half a kilometre away from the main village to the north.

The crucial difference between the production team and the natural village or villager group is that the former bears a direct economic significance as a collective unit of production, while the later is almost purely nominal in terms of economic operation. The household production system, which is known as the 'agricultural responsibility system', came to Zhaojiahe in 1981. Since then, the villager group, which used to be the unit of collective economic operation and political control, has lost all its power in both economic and political sense. The economic power of the production team (the villager group) has been taken away by individual households, while the political power has gone, if there is any left, to the (administrative) village as a whole.

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With respect to economic development, the percentage of industrial product in the gross product in Chengcheng is 23.38% in 1990, while the percentage of agricultural product is more

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[23]According to *pu-tong-hua* pronunciation, it should be spelled as *gan-bu*.

than fifty percent. Although there was a rapid increase in industrial production (more than ten percent per year) in the 1980s, agriculture still dominated the county's economy. In Chengcheng, the percentage of industrial labour force population was less than 5% of the total labour force population in 1990.[24] Most people who live in Chengcheng County are officially classified as peasants.

Winter wheat is the main crop and the most popular cash crop is cotton. Corn, sweet-potato, millet and soybean are also available. Since the mid 1980s, the local government started to encourage villagers in the area to grow either flue-cured tobacco or apple trees, especially in the hilly areas, for the purpose of improving peasants' income. Popular vegetables in the area are Chinese cabbage, cucumber, tomato, carrot and potato. For daily meals in the area, the most common food is steamed bread with chilli and salt. Steamed bread is given not only a nutritious importance but also a social significance. It is not only the best food but also, for many Zhao villagers, the only food. Noodles - a popular kind of food in north China - are not particularly welcomed in Zhaojiahe. As a young villager once said to me: "My uncle is crazy. He eats noodles everyday and is never tired of them. How could he!? We cannot do that. We all like steamed bread here". Steamed bread is also thought to be the best daily food that one can expect. Once when I was talking to an old villager about the village past, he told me: "It is great now. You can eat steamed bread everyday now. How can you wish it to be better? The only problem of the present is that you don't feel safe". Due to the fact that main nutritious assimilation comes from grain - especially wheat flour, an adult male villager will consume about 500-550 *jin* grain per year.[25] Having vegetable or meat dishes on the dining table indicates that there are either important guests or special social occasions.

From 1878 to 1988, the peasant average annual income per capita in Shaanxi increased from 133.57 to 404.14 *yuan*, which shows an annual increase rate of 11.7%. According to the sampling survey on peasant income and expenditure,[26] the average peasant annual income of Shaanxi in 1989 was 433.67 *yuan*. About 90% of the peasant income came from their household production and income from the collectively organised economic operation was less than 3%.[27] In Zhaojiahe, there was no income from any kind of collective operations in 1991-92 and all peasant income came from their own household production, which may not be restricted to agriculture though. Except for one family, all Zhao households were engaged in agricultural activities, producing wheat and cotton. Apart from engaging in agriculture, some Zhao villagers - less than ten percent - started to develop into other areas of economic activities. For the majority of Zhao villagers, sources of income are limited. Zhao villagers themselves often insisted that they had little to spend. Once when I was talking to a village school teacher, he repeatedly said to me: "We (Zhao villagers) have an economic crisis *(jin-ji-wei-ji)*. No money to spend". Although it is difficult to make an overall estimate, it is likely to be true to assume

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[24]See Zhongguo Fenxian Nongcun Jinji Tongji Gaiyao ('Rural Economic Statistics Yearbook by County), 1990: 210-213.

[25]The average grain consumption per peasant in Shaanxi was 482.22 *jin* in 1988. This number remained quite stable in the 1980s, see Shaanxi Sishi Nian ('Forty Years of Shaanxi'), 1990: 578.

[26]This is a regular statistical survey made by the Statistical Bureau of China since the early 1980s.

[27]See Zhongguo Nongye Nianjian ('China's Agricultural Statistics Yearbook'), 1990: 425-7.

that Zhao villagers may have a slightly lower annual income than the average of the province.

Despite the fact that I was told so many times that Zhao villagers did not have enough money to spend, many agreed that there was not any problem in food supply. Every household seemed to have a relatively large amount of grain storage, which was usually stored in big vats in the back of their cave dwellings. For instance, in Dawa, the estimated amount of grain storage per person is no less than one thousand *jin*.[28] This amount of storage could be used for two years self consumption for an adult villager.

In Zhaojiahe, income may vary from one household to another but economic stratification was still in embryo by the early 1990s. Recently, the problem of peasant stratification caught the attention of scholars in mainland China. For instance, Lu, as both a government official and a scholar, carried out a series of studies of peasant stratification. One of his findings is that an imbalance of rural development has occurred in terms of economic stratification. In some areas there may have already been a highly stratified economy, while in other places economic stratification has not yet fully emerged (e.g. Lu 1992) Zhaojiahe falls into the later group in which economic stratification only started to emerge in the early 1990s. This may partly be due to the fact that there had been no village industries in Zhaojiahe until 1992, and it seemed to be very unlikely to have any in the near future since the collective operation in economy was so weak that there was no investment possible. Not only will individual investment based upon household production take a long time to accumulate the necessary amount of capital but also the mode of production of household economy may restrict the emergence of industrial activities.

Young villagers in Zhaojiahe started to operate small businesses such as flour grinding, cotton squeezing, bean-curd making and so forth. However, these operations are often extensions of their agricultural activities. No family in the village operates a professional business which is not attached to their agricultural activities.

Taking the village as a whole, when talking about intra-village groupings, Zhao villagers often divided seven groups into two parts. Nanjian, Xinzhuang and Dawa were said to be 'good groups' *(hao-dui)*, and the rest was said to be 'bad ones' *(lan-dui)*. But explanations given for this division were different. As a villager from Nanjian once said: "Those people (i.e. from Group 1, 2, 3, and 7, see Map 8) are like too-watery-mud *(xi-ha)* and cannot do anything well. Our people (i.e. from Group 4, 5, and 6) are good. If you go into their courtyards, you will see the difference. In *our* groups, I dare not say that every courtyard is clean, but they are all quite tidy. But, if you step into those yards of *their* groups, you will find out how dirty they are! Some of their courtyards are so messy that you won't be able to find a place to lay your feet on." The villagers from Houdi Group 1), Dongbang (Group 2 and 7) and Xibang (Group 3) commented differently: "Those people (i.e. from Group 4, 5, and 6) are better off since their lands are better. They have land near the river and their land can be irrigated.[29] Our land is

[28]I had collected individual estimates of grain storage for each household in Dawa from two independent sources. Afterwards, I checked with some of these households to see whether they agreed or not. Most of the estimates were accepted by households that I checked with.

[29]This is not true for Dawa. All Dawa's land are on hills which cannot be irrigated.

bad, either on the top of hills or in the bottom of ravines. Sometimes, we cannot even bring fertilisers there. What can we do about this?" Geographically, Houdi, Dongbang and Xibang are spread out in the north-western part of the village, while Nanjian (Group 4), Xinzhuang (Group 5) and Dawa (Group 6) lie in the south-east (see Map 8). According to Zhao villagers, the difference between these two parts of the village also existed during the period of the people' communes.

With the advent of the economic reforms in the 1980s, a new differentiation gradually emerged within the cluster of 'good groups'. That is, Dawa was talked about in the main village as a "Xiao Taiwan" (the little Taiwan) since there was a higher proportion of television set ownership in Dawa. Those who did not have a television set explained this by saying that television ownership aimed to show the prosperity of a family, especially if there was a need to attract brides. The villagers from the main village often related the high proportion of television ownership of Dawa villagers to their personal attributes. For instance, one village from Nanjian once said to me: "We (i.e. those from the main village) all call Dawa 'the little Taiwan'. They live better than us but people in Dawa are difficult to be with *(diao de tai)*. They are very good at playing tricks. They know lots of things (to deal with human relations) that we do not know". Underlying this interpretation, there is a presupposition about the relationship between wealth and the importance of handling human relations. Zhao villagers were fully aware of possible economic stratification in the near future and made interesting interpretations (see Chapter 7).

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From an outsider's point of view, low income may be seen as due to low productivity. Almost ninety percent of their wheat output is consumed by Zhao villagers themselves. Agricultural production in Zhaojiahe as well as in the neighbouring area is still carried out in the traditional way, which has the following characters. Firstly, farming tools have changed little. In comparison to the farming tools that M. C. Yang described in a Shandong village almost fifty years ago (1945: 251-7), little difference can be found in the case of Zhaojiahe.[30] Only three households out of twenty one in Dawa reported that in 1990 their wheat were reaped by machines.[31] This is partly because some of the village terraced fields could not be done by reaping machines. Villages on the plateaux are more inclined to application of agricultural machinery. In this aspect, Zhaojiahe is very far behind. Secondly, small scale co-operation among family members constitute the main form of economic operation. Most agricultural operations require no more than two persons. According to Zhao villagers, women did not participate the agricultural work during the pre-communist era. For instance, with regard to wheat production, women in the past only went to the field when the harvest was in process.[32] Women, while kneeling down with their binding feet, would help men to make

[30]I myself did not see Zhao villagers using the share (Fig. 10a - Yang 1945: 253) and the flail (Fig. 21 - Yang 1945: 255) but I saw these two tools lying in my host's courtyard. The only tool, which was described by Yang and I did not find in Zhaojiahe, was the mouldboard (Fig. 10b - Yang 1945: 253). Except for the above three tools, I either participated or observed Zhao villagers using the other tools.

[31]This is very different from the number given by the official statistics. According to an official report, the proportion of area by machine reaping in Chengcheng reached 67.27% in 1990.

[32]For a discussion of women's role in fields during the pre-communist period, see, for instance, M. C. Yang 1945: 35, 233; Fei 1939: 171.

newly-cut wheat stalks into bundles. As old women recalled: "We did not go to the field in the past since our feet were bound. We could not walk fast and long, so we stayed at home around stove. Unlike girls of nowadays, their feet are huge and they do everything as men do". The change that took place during the Maoist era was that women fully participated in all kinds of agricultural activities. Thirdly, agricultural production relies almost entirely on human and animal labour. Oxen, mules and donkeys are the main animal labour which are used for both transportation and cultivation.

If there is anything that breaks the traditional pattern of agricultural practice, it is the uses of chemical fertilisers. Even during the Maoist era, Zhao villagers were very reluctant to use chemical fertilisers. As my host in Dawa, Wanbin, said to me: "Oh, during the period of people's communes, chemical fertilisers were free, but no one dared to use them. We wondered: could this kind of white powder (i.e. carbamide) do good to our crops? Would not it be harmful for our crops? Better leave it alone. But, nowadays, despite that chemical fertilisers are very expensive, everyone still uses them because everyone knows that chemical fertilisers can make a big difference in output".

Each villager is entitled to about three *mu* of land in Zhaojiahe, which is a little higher than the average figure of the province.[33] The average output of grain production per *mu* in Chengcheng in 1989 was 165 *jin*, while the average output of wheat per *mu* was 110.3 *jin*.[34] Output in Zhaojiahe varied not only from one household to another but also from year to year. For instance, my host in Dawa, Wanbin, reported that he managed to have an average wheat output of about 700 *jin/mu* in 1990, which was an extraordinary performance despite the fact that 1990 was an excellent year in terms of climate - plenty of rainfall. In 1991, Wanbin reported that he had in average only 250 *jin/mu* output of wheat, which is still much higher than the average figure quoted in the county's records. Other villagers in Zhaojiahe reported that, in a good year, average output of wheat could reach 300 or 400 *jin/mu* but, in a bad year, it could be lees than 100 *jin/mu*. There is no way to check how much Zhao villagers actually thresh in the autumn of the year since there is no need for such inquiry. Apart from the amount of grains which have to be paid to the government as taxes, all of the remaining output is brought back to one's household without carefully weighing. When Zhao villagers talked about how much they had produced or how much they had stored, they were making estimates rather than counting.

* * *

Out of the total harvest, Zhao villagers have to pay three categories of taxes, which are respectively the state tax, the Xiang tax and the village accumulation *(ti-liu)*. In 1991, the state tax, which is called the 'agricultural tax' and has to be paid in the form of wheat, was 135 *jin* per villager in Zhaojiahe. One hundred and thirty five *jin* wheat equals to 32.4 *yuan* under the price commanded by the central government - 0.24 *yuan/jin* in 1991. The market price of wheat in 1991 was 0.42 *yuan/jin* in the Chengcheng area. If a villager wants to sell more

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[33]In 1988, the average responsibility land contracted to each villager in Shaanxi was 2.64 *mu*. See Zhongguo Nongye Nianjian ('China's Agricultural Statistics Yearbook'), 1990: 573.

[34]See Chengcheng Xianzhi ('Record of Chengcheng'), 1991: 109-10.

wheat than he is required, the government will purchase it at the market price. However, unless it is necessary, Zhao villagers preferred to store their wheat rather than selling it. The Xiang tax, which is supposed to be used for the local administrative expenditure such as payment of salaries for village school teachers, included three main categories in 1991 in Leijiawa: Added Fees for Education, Tax for Peculiar Economic Crops and Tobacco Tax. The former two Xiang taxes were applicable to every villager, while Tobacco Tax was only applicable to those who did not grow tobacco. According to the Xiang government, this tax aimed at increasing peasant income. If they grew tobacco, they could sell it to a tobacco factory in the town, which was the biggest single factory in Chengcheng. Otherwise villagers had to pay for not growing tobacco. However, no villager in Zhaojiahe grew tobacco in 1991-92 and they all chose to pay the tax. Their reason was that they did not know how to grow tobacco. The village accumulation is mainly used for paying salaries of village cadres, which is the most problematic tax. Both Xiang taxes and the village accumulation are also paid in the form of wheat. The price which was used for calculating wheat was the market one.

It is very difficult to present a general estimate of taxes because not only the amount of these taxes varies from year to year but also categories of taxes commanded by the Xiang and the village change every year. Let us take only 1991 as an example. In 1991, all taxes for the Xiang government was 17.3 *yuan* and the village accumulation was 23 *yuan*. The following is the summary of 1991 in taxes in Zhaojiahe:

	amount per capita	%
State Tax (the agricultural tax)	32.4 *yuan*	44.57
Xiang Taxes (three categories)	17.3 *yuan*	23.80
Village Accumulation ('ti-liu')	23.0 *yuan*	31.64
Total (per villager)	72.7 *yuan*	100.0

It is necessary to point out that the State Tax is calculated in the state price, that is 0.24 *yuan* per *jin*. If using the market price, i.e. 0.42 *yuan* per *jin*, it will become 56.7 *yuan* per person. The table will be rewritten as follows:

	amount per capita	%
State Tax (the agricultural tax)	56.7 *yuan*	58.45
Xiang Taxes (three categories)	17.3 *yuan*	17.83
Village Accumulation ('ti-liu')	23.0 *yuan*	23.71
Total (per villager)	97.0 *yuan*	100.0

If the increase rate in peasant annual income is 11.7% and the average annual income is 433.67 *yuan* in 1989, there will be an estimate of average peasant annual income of 541.08 *yuan* in 1991. According to this number, the tax rate for Zhao villagers was either 13.44% (due to the state price) or 17.92% (due to the market price) in 1991.

1.5 Population, Education and Communication

The village population tripled since 1949. Population figures and household sizes arranged by each group are given in Table 1 and 2.

Table 1. Population and Households (1990)

Group	Name of Group	Population (m/f)	No. of Household
1	Houdi ('land behind')	87 (42/45)	22
2	Dongbang ('eastern edge')	111 (51/60)	25
3	Xibang ('western edge')	81 (41/40)	19
4	Nanjian ('south spot')	185 (90/89)	44
5	Xinzhuang ('new place')	204 (101/103)	46
6	Dawa ('big dent')	89 (46/43)	20
7	Dongbang ('eastern edge')	103 (55/48)	25
Total		860 (432/428)	201

Source: Household Registration 1990.

Table 2. Household Size (1990)

	Numbers of people in each household								
group	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	total
1		5	2	6	7	2			22
2			7	8	5	2	3		25
3		2	2	7	5	3			19
4	2	4	6	14	10	5	3		44
5	1	1	14	12	5	7	4	2	46
6		1	2	9	4	3	1		20
7	1	3	4	7	5	4	1		25
total	4	16	37	63	41	26	12	2	201
%	2	8	18	31	20	13	6	1	

Source: Household Registration 1990.

The numbers in the above tables were obtained from the village accountant who kept some basic statistics. Although there might be miscalculations and even deliberate mistakes in household registration, in general these figures represent the structure of the village's demographic tendency and household size, which coincides with my own observation.

Nonetheless, population figures were openly disputed by the villagers. As an old villager in Dawa once said, "Those numbers are made to fool *(hu-neng)* the government *(shang-bian)*. Let us take Dawa as an example, is there a family *(hu)* without unreported children? Nowadays, everything is made to fool others." It is true that the total population of the village might have been underestimated. In 1985, the administration of population registration changed and, since then, it was officially set to take place once every five years. This is an arrangement made in accordance with land adjustment. Land is supposed to be adjusted every five years according to new births and deaths. Therefore, there were no records between two registrations in a time span of five years. In some cases, young girl babies were deliberately held back from registration, since the local policy was that, if a couple had only one girl, they would be allowed to have another pregnancy. Zhao villagers love their children and there is

no infanticide of girl babies as far as I could tell. The actual population in the village in 1992 was estimated, from a random sample of 20 households, to be 7.4-9.8 percent more than the registered population.[35] This was collaborated by villagers' rule of thumb estimates.

Apart from the accuracy of numbers, there is also a problem of definition. In the household registration, only those who had been given a piece of land were recorded. In other words, only 'agricultural residents' were recorded. However, those who actually lived in the village might not be agricultural residents or, those who were agricultural residents might have moved to live in towns or somewhere else, leaving their land for relatives to look after. For instance, some young people went to work on construction sites in the town or mines in the north.

However, some general observations are made possible with assistance of these two tables. Sex ratios in all groups are quite balanced, while, according to Chengcheng Xianzhi ('Records of Chengcheng'), it used to be very imbalanced during the dynastic periods. For instance, in the period of Jiaqing Emperor of the Ming Dynasty (1551), the sex ratio of the county was 208.8/100 (male/female). During the period of Qianlong Emperor, Qing Dynasty (1783), the ratio was 154.3/100. The reason given by the government for such an imbalanced sex ratio in the past was that feudal ideologies regarded men as superior to women.[36] However, the sex ratio had started to become normal before the communists came to power. In 1946, for instance, it was 106.8/100 in the area. This balance maintained through the communist era.

The household size in Zhaojiahe in 1990 was 4.28 persons, which is also quite ordinary.[37] However, in a long run, the household size declined in Chengcheng. According to the records of Chengcheng, in 1551 - the Jiaqing Emperor, Ming Dynasty - household size was 7.6 persons, while in 1783 - the Jianlong Emperor, Qin Dynasty - it was 5.3 persons. During the period of Republic China, household size declined to 3.7 persons, which may be due to the consequence of establishment of the *bao-jia* system[38] and the policies of recruiting soldiers for Guomindang armies. In the 1950s, the household size in Chengcheng climbed up to 5 persons.

In Chengcheng, the average arable land per villager has been declining. In 1949, the average land per peasant was 8.01 *mu*, while in 1970 it dropped to only a little more than half of that in 1949, that is, 4.24 *mu* per peasant. In 1987, it further went down to 3.18 *mu* per person. In Zhaojiahe, when asked, the villagers always replied by saying that they had roughly about three *mu* land per person. Although three *mu* per person is not a large amount of land, it is much better than many other places in rural China such as provinces along the south-eastern coast areas, where peasants could have only as little as 0.1 *mu* of land.

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Just as their land is cultivated by themselves, the village school is also largely maintained by Zhao villagers. There is a village school which can provide four years' primary

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[35]The survey was conducted by myself with a statistical significance of 95%.
[36]See Chengcheng Xianzhi 1991: 79.
[37]For a discussion of fertility norms and family size with reference to different models based on historical development, see Croll 1985. The most popularly quoted reference on the issue of family (household) size during the pre-communist era is Buck's influential work done from 1929-1931 in a wide range of rural Chinese communities. Buck found that the average Chinese farm family size was 5.21 persons (cf. Croll 1985).
[38]For a brief discussion of *bao-jia* system, see M. C. Yang, 1945: 244-5.

education. The age of starting school varied according to different families, but it was usually between six to eight. A kindergarten *(xue-qian-ban)*, which was attached to the school, was available for children between five to seven. When the villagers talked about why they wanted their children to go to school, they would often say, "Oh, they are too little to do anything and useless at home. During day time, we all go to the fields and nobody looks after them. So they had better go to school". This may be the reason that a school day is always a long day. Even in winter, children have to arrive at school at six forty five, when it is completely dark and cold. No breakfast is served. Pupils will return home for their breakfast at ten and lunch at two, and classes continue till when it is dark, which means that their parents would have returned from the fields. Teachers at the school told me that, if they let children go home early, their parents would not be happy *(you-yi-jian)*.

All Zhao children go to school no matter whether they are boys or girls, though girls might be more likely to drop out after three or four years' primary education since they are required to contribute to the family economy earlier than boys. Girls of ten or so are supposed to help with house chores, especially looking after younger brothers or sisters. While, boys are supposed to help their parents in the fields when they reach fourteen or fifteen. The maximum number of years of education available in the Zhaojiahe school is four, and two more years' primary education are possible in Houjiahe, a village in the south of two or three kilometres away from Zhaojiahe (see Map 7). Every child is welcomed to join secondary education in the township. High schools are divided into the junior and senior ones. The junior high school, in which three years' secondary education is offered, is located in Leijiawa Xiang (township) and the senior high school is in the county town which offers another three years' secondary education. Few from Zhaojiahe have been successful in reaching higher education by going to colleges or universities outside the county, let alone outside the province. The government policy is to promote nine years' elementary education (six years' primary plus three years' secondary) in the area.

The maintenance of the village school, mainly the teachers' salaries, come from a special tax collected by the Xiang government. All teachers are recruited from other villages through the Xiang administration, and they are mainly young women who have failed to proceed further in seeking higher education.

Among young generations in Zhaojiahe there is no one illiterate or *wen-mang* (literally, 'character-blind'), though the degree of literacy may be questionable. According to the records of Chengcheng, in 1945, 66% of the total population was illiterate ('character-blind'). In 1964, after the anti-literacy campaign promoted by the communist government in the early 1950s, the illiteracy rate dropped to 35.4%. In 1982, there was only 21.4% of the total population in Chengcheng who were illiterate ('character-blind'). In Zhaojiahe, a few aged villagers - most of them are women - could not read. However, to know how to read and to read are two different things. Few villagers, either old or young, either male or female, read in daily life. When I was in the village, there was only one provincial newspaper delivered to the village school twice a week. Readership of this newspaper was exclusively restricted to the school teachers, in spite of the fact that the school teachers seldom read it carefully. During the whole period

of my stay in the village, I only saw once that one young villager in his late twenties was reading a magazine which was full of *gong-fu* (martial art) stories.

This does not mean that there is no place for social uses of literacy. For instance, many villagers keep their own household accounts in writing. On weddings or funerals, Zhao villagers also write down in amazing detail each piece of gifts that they receive. Literacy is also used as irreplaceable decoration for special occasions such as Chinese New Year and other holidays. Big characters written on red papers are shown for almost every single significant social occasion. On these occasions Zhao villagers often turn to ask others to help them to write, no matter whether they themselves know how to write or not. This is to say, literacy is necessary for village life but it is not necessary for individual life in Zhaojiahe.

Zhao villagers seldom write letters. If they write a letter, they will have to send to the post office in the county town which is twenty five *li* away from the village. There is no telephone in the village and many Zhao villagers have never seen a telephone in their entire life. Electricity only became available in May 1989. However, I was amazed by hearing one villager in Dawa saying that his family had a television set three days later after the electricity had been installed.[39] More than half of the households in Dawa owned television sets in 1991-92 and one third of the households in the main village had television sets. Less then one third of the total number of television sets in the village were colour sets. The most welcomed program on television is the local opera which is called Qinqiang. Qinqiang is performed in the local dialect and is regularly shown on television every Friday evening. Before dark on Friday, those who did not have television sets at home would go to join either their neighbours or their friends to enjoy the evening. Foreign films and soap series were disliked. In fact, I was a little surprised by the reply of a senior high school student in the village when I asked the question about television programmes. The student said to me, "No, I don't like foreign films. They are too slow. People in these films don't move. When they talk to each other, they turn their faces in such a slow way that it makes me drowsy". Certainly this student was not talking about Hollywood action movies, but he did like Hong Kong *gong-fu* (martial art) films. The consequences of television watching need more time to be understood.

Radio is popular. There used to be a public tweeter system broadcasting within the village during the period of people's communes. Some Zhao villagers complained about its disappearance. Without other means of communication, face to face contact remains the available form - if not the only one - of communication. As a matter of fact, most of the daily contacts that Zhao villagers make are restricted to a neighbouring circle of walking distance.

1.6 The Neighbouring Villages

Before going to discuss the neighbouring areas of Zhaojiahe, we need to examine a pair of local words which are used to describe an important geographic difference. Two local terms, *yuan-shang* and *yuan-xia*, are used by Zhao villagers to describe those who live on plateaux

[39]Many said that they had watched the student demonstration in Tiananmen, May-June, 1989.

and those who live in valleys. The term *yuan* can be literally translated as "plateau", while *shang* and *xia* can be translated as 'up' and 'down' respectively. To put them together, 'yuanshang' is 'up-on-plateau' and 'yuanxia', 'down-in-valley'. When I was in the village, to talk about the neighbouring villages, Zhao villagers would first of all refer to whether it was a *yuanshang* village or a *yuanxia* village. There is a social significance associated with this geographic difference. When Zhao villagers talked about the period of people's communes, they would always remember that, as a *yuanxia* village, Zhaojiahe used to attract brides from *yuanshang* villages. As a woman once said: "In the past (i.e. in the period of people's communes), our Zhaojiahe was better-off since we had more grains, especially in the years of severe droughts. *Yuanxia* villages could manage in bad years because we had rivers. Girls would like to marry into our Zhaojiahe in the past". However, when talking about the present situation of the village, Zhao villagers often showed a great deal of disappointment of living in *yuanxia*. As one of my hosts once said to me: "*Yuanshang* is much better than our meshed *yuanxia* place. Everything up there is better than our Zhaojiahe. *Yuanshang* people walk smoothly. They can go anywhere. If we want to go anywhere, we have to climb these hills first. You cannot even ride a bicycle in *yuanxia*. It is really horrible living here". The neighbouring villages in the early 1990s are thus divided into two groups: *yuanshang* or *yuanxia*.

With respect to the way in which the neighbouring villages are referred to by Zhao villagers, there are three senses of neighbourhood. Firstly, Zhao villagers talk about the neighbouring villages in terms of marriage circles and relatives obtained through affinal ties. This is a social dimension of neighbourhood which does not in general extend beyond township boundary (see Map 7). In other words, in a social sense, the neighbouring villages are villages with which Zhao villagers exchange brides. It is by no means astonishing to find that mate selection is restricted to a circle of walking distance in rural Chinese communities. Many have long noted that a residential propinquity maintains a basic rule for mate selection in rural China.[40] There are basically two kinds of social activities taking place among the neighbouring villages in its social sense. One is to establish relationships, by means of exchanging brides, through marriage ties; and the other is to maintain these relationships, by means of food exchange, to create economic and ceremonial co-operation in order to benefit both sides. This sense of neighbouring villages represent Zhao villagers' networks of social relationships, which are of great importance to their daily life.

As a *yuanxia* village, Zhaojiahe was suffering increasing difficulties of recruiting brides from its conventional territories, particularly from its conventional *yuanshang* partners, in the past ten years. For instance, with respect to bride exchange, Zhaojiahe used to maintain a close relationship with Qincheng, a *yuanshang* village in Heyang, but marriage connections between these two villages became extremely problematic since the 1980s as few brides from Qincheng were willing to marry into Zhaojiahe. This situation somehow forced Zhao villagers to turn to find brides either from other *yuanxia* villages or, even, from within Zhaojiahe. As a

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[40]See, for instance, Croll 1981: 85.

matter of fact, in Zhaojiahe, the rule of prohibition of intra-village marriage was breached in the late 1970s.

It is important to note that the geographic difference between *yuanshang* and *yuanxia* emerged as a social awareness in the past ten years. For the first time in Zhaojiahe history, although the geographic difference between plateaux and valleys had always been there, Zhao villagers had to live with a specific social construction of this geographic difference, in which Zhao villagers felt being inferior towards their *yuanshang* counterparts. Zhao villagers were fully aware of this difference. For instance, when Wanyou, as a matchmaker and ceremonial chef, was asked to tell me about the provenance of wives of each household, he referred to names of villages from which they came when he talked about aged wives; while when he turned to young wives who had married in the 1980s, Wanyou referred first to whether they came from *yuanshang* or *yuanxia*.

Secondly, in daily conversations, Zhao villagers often refer to two markets which they frequently visit. This may be seen as another sense of neighbourhood for the village, that is, the marketing circle. In his classical study of 'marketing and social structure in rural China' (1964), Skinner showed that villagers were not only members of their village communities but also members of their marketing communities, and pointed out the difference between economic and social aspect of marketing. In order to understand how Zhao villagers can be seen as belonging to any marketing community, we have to know how transactions for different kinds of needs are done in the village.

In Zhaojiahe, there are two kinds of 'markets' serving different purposes, which may in a way parallel what Skinner called 'economic and social aspect of marketing'. The first kind of markets deal with daily sustenance, which is exclusively confined to economic aspect of marketing. For obtaining most of the daily goods such as cooking oil, sugar, salt, plastic utensils, candy, biscuits and so forth, Zhao villagers do not go to markets but, rather, markets come to the village. Travelling traders, who carry their goods on either a donkey cart or a bicycle, frequently visit Zhaojiahe as well as other villages in the area. These traders come either from other villages or from the town. It is important to note that transactions with travelling traders are commonly done by exchange rather than purchase. Zhao villagers, in most cases, will exchange their wheat for daily goods they need. It is called in the village *huan* (literally, 'exchange'). The traders come to the village with a steelyard, singing in a special tone for a special kind of goods. Because Zhao villagers could themselves produce most of things that they need in daily life, there is only a limited number of goods that they need to exchange.[41] The traders may accept anything that they think valuable in exchange, but in the most common cases transaction is made between wheat and daily goods.

The rate for exchange depends on many elements. As I was told, for instance, in 1990, because there was a good harvest of watermelons in the neighbouring area, one *jin* wheat could exchange for thirty *jin* watermelons. For daily necessities such as salt, cooking oil and so forth,

[41]For a discussion of daily maintenance, see also Chapter 5.

there may be great variations. In 1992, six *jin* wheat could be used for exchange of one *jin* cooking oil. My host's wife told me that this rate was higher than the previous year.

The second kind of markets are markets in the conventional sense, that is, markets hold at particular places where people go for purchase or selling. In Zhaojiahe, these markets are not called 'markets' *(shi-chang),* but *hui* (literally, 'meeting'). There is no difference between the way in which *hui* (i.e. 'markets') is talked about and the way in which political meetings during the Maoist era are referred to. For instance, one villager once recalled, "There had been too many *hui* in the past (i.e. 'Mao's time'), and we started to feel being bothered". The core meaning of the term *hui* is 'gathering'. That is, if a group of people want to discuss something or meet, it will be said in Chinese, "Let us have a *hui*". For Zhao villagers, to go to a market is "to go to play at *hui (dao hui shang shua shua)*". Zhao villagers do not go to *hui* only for purchase or selling. Instead, the most important activity of going to *hui* is to meet people and visit their relatives. Wherever there is a *hui,* one can always see the scene that villagers squat or sit in small groups, enjoying tea and cigarettes together. Many Zhao villagers go to *hui* without a penny with them. Once I asked Danpo, an old woman in Dawa, why she visited Qincheng *hui* frequently but seldom bought anything. She raised her voice: "Hai, going to the *hui* is just to play. There are more people there.[42] To buy things needs money. Who has money? My son never gives me money. I just go there to have fun." In this sense, this kind of marketing is more social than economic in nature.

There are two kinds of *hui* in the Zhaojiahe area - regular and annual *hui.* Large villages often have their own annual *hui.* Zhaojiahe *hui,* for instance, takes place on the first of the third month of the Chinese lunar calendar. For Zhao villagers, another significant annual *hui* is the Dangjiahe *hui,* which is held on the fifteenth of the third month of the lunar calendar. In these annual *hui,* there is more food sold than other things. Zhao villagers talk about these *hui* as festivals rather than markets. Grandmothers and mothers, while putting on their new clothes, visit their granddaughters and daughters on these social occasions.

Regular *hui* are set up according to *xun* of lunar calendars.[43] Two regular *hui* (i.e. markets) are important for Zhao villagers. In Qincheng - a neighbouring village across the river, there is a "9 *hui*", which meets on the 9th, 19th and 29th of the lunar month. There is a "3-6-9 *hui*" in the county town, which meets on the 3rd, 6th, 9th, 13th, 16th, 19th, 23th, 26th, 29th of the lunar month. Significant transactions such as buying or selling a cow have to be done on these regular *hui.* It is important to note that *hui* is often talked about in the village as activities rather than market places. Buying and selling often take place within the village, while when Zhao villagers go to *hui,* they will sit together to talk to each other for hours. In this sense, that is, the social aspect of marketing, there seems to be an overlap between marriage circle and marketing circle in terms of the neighbouring villages.

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[42]Entertainment is inevitably related to people in Zhaojiahe. Once when I was talking to Yafeng, a nephew of my host in Dawa, who was in his third year junior high school, he suddenly said, "It was so boring in the village". I wondered why. He replied, "Because there are too few people here". He then added that, in the county town, it was much more fun because there were so many people there.

[43]For a discussion of the *xun (hsun)* family of scheduling systems, see, for instance, Skinner 1964: 14.

The importance is to realise that, although many aspects of village life are intertwined with a wider milieu of social environment, Zhao villagers seem to hold on to the idea of self maintenance. They do not produce for exchange and marketing is not talked about in the village as if it is intrinsic of their life. What is essential for them is rather the significance of social relationships established along the neighbouring villages. Going to *hui* is part of making and remaking the networks of their social relationships.

Apart from the above two senses of neighbourhood, there is another dimension of vicinity which is politically defined. That is Leijiawa where the Xiang local government is situated. As one of the eighteen townships ('Xiang') governed by Chengcheng County, Leijiawa, which is about five kilometres away from Zhaojiahe in the west, is the centre of local power. Several aspects of influences from Leijiawa Xiang affect Zhao villagers' life. Firstly, the party secretary of Zhaojiahe - no matter whether he is elected or not within the village - has be confirmed by the Xiang party committee. This is to say that the self-administration system is partially decided by the party committee in Leijiawa, since members of the village committee have to be appointed by the party secretary. The Xiang government has the right to change or adjust members of both the village committee and the party branch in Zhaojiahe. Secondly, the Xiang government imposes local taxes - as we have seen earlier - and is in charge of collecting taxes for the central government. Thirdly, with regard to the content of teaching, the village school is under the administration of the Xiang government. The junior high school is only available in Leijiawa. Fourthly, there is a local court in Leijiawa which deals with jural conflicts which the village committee cannot handle. Finally, the most important aspect of influence from the Xiang government is that the Xiang government manipulates the birth control policy. Twice a year, the Xiang officials come to Zhaojiahe with a list of women who are required to have sterilisation operations and check from one household to another.

Except for these possible daily contacts, the Xiang government has the major responsibility to help the villagers to make economic progress. In Leijiawa, for instance, in order to improve the area's agricultural performance, there was recently established an 'improved seeds supply unit', a 'veterinary station' and a 'pesticide shop'. However, in daily conversations, Leijiawa township is less talked about as an agricultural assistant institution by Zhao villagers. It is referred to as a political centre. Few Zhao villagers have had any direct contact with officials from the county but quite a few of them are familiar with officials from the township. For the Xiang officials, Zhaojiahe is said to be a difficult village to deal with. The networks of personal and social relationships are too complicated in Zhaojiahe, according to one official who was sent - together with six others in a team - to the village to carry out a 'socialist education campaign' in the spring of 1992. The team failed to make any progress with what they had promised earlier. One of the team members said before he had left: "Oh, Zhaojiahe is so muddy and relationships are so complicated *(Zhaojiahe xiha de tai)* that no one can do anything about it!"

Discussion

In recent years, alongside the general critique of the making of the anthropological object (e.g. Fabian 1983) , the notion of 'village', often associated with the functionalist school, is under critical re-examination, which in turn directs our attention to the question of how a specific local setting can be appropriately situated in a wider social, economic and political context.[44] As we have seen in this chapter, Zhaojiahe seems to bear many characteristics that can be easily fitted into the conventional image of a Chinese village, for instance, its strong self-consciousness of being a single surname village, its total lack of industrial activities, its self-maintenance of production and consumption, its isolation in terms of communication and transportation, and so forth. However, these characteristics are exactly what I see as being produced and reproduced by the very process of transformation in modern China. They are constructs of a certain kind of power relations.

Since the early 1980s, official attention has constantly been focused on two polarised examples of development in rural China - highly developed areas where rural industry prevails, or poor areas where special government allocations are constantly required. Zhaojiahe belongs to none of these two groups and it is a village that sustains itself in its production. Villages like Zhaojiahe are unlikely to appear in government reports and they are, in a sense - as Zhao villagers put it - 'forgotten'. My argument is that Zhaojiahe and the villages as such constitute a very core element of the general force of social transformation in rural China, which forces Chinese villagers to take action.

Although, to the local officials, Zhaojiahe may not appear to be a focus of attention, Zhao villagers are fully aware of the changing governmental strategies of the past decade, which in turn make Zhao villagers change, consciously or unconsciously, their own strategies and tactics of everyday practices. Although, to the eyes of an outsider, Zhaojiahe appears to be a relatively isolated community, there is a crucial change in the villagers' conceptualisation of space. Space as a source of social power emerged in the past decade as a major frame of reference for social classification and action. Croll (1994) argues that, along with the economic reforms, Chinese peasants retreat from the revolutionary rhetoric about the heaven of the future and return to the present of the earth. Zhao villagers openly criticise the current policies and have developed a nostalgia for the Maoist past. This, I think, shows how they see the uncertain future of their own village. This perception of the future is embodied in the changing strategies of spatial-temporal practices.

In my view, the emergence of socio-economic stratification is not only a result of macro-economic and political transformation but also indicates the changes in the strategies of spatial-temporal practices. Zhao villagers are not great travellers, but other places and locations have much more social meaning and significance to them at present than ever before. It is in this context that an awareness of 'self', being located in a 'bad' place, makes the notion

[44]For a critical review of the debates about fieldwork and fieldwork locations, see my Introduction.

'Zhao villagers' meaningful to both themselves and the outsiders. To stress that they are 'Zhao villagers' means to stress their existence in relation to the overwhelming process of social change which creates new categories and boundaries based on space rather than time. This, I think, is the reason that Zhao villagers develop this sense of solidarity; not to refuse change and mobility, but because they are not able to. I shall, in the following chapters of my writing, use the term 'Zhao villagers' in this sense.

Clearly, Zhao villagers, being located on the periphery of economic development, are not making history; rather, they are part of a historical process on which a discourse is authorised by the Chinese state (Yang 1994; Ong, in press). However, there are many different forms of interpretations and explanations of this process, among which Zhao villagers have their own. Instead of trying to look directly at interactions between Zhaojiahe and the wider socio-economic change, I will in this thesis focus on the changing strategies and tactics of everyday practices in the village in order to provide an understanding of the 'logic of practice', which I believe bears wider significance for an understanding of Chinese society and culture. The following chapters will focus on different aspects of the village life as social practice and examine in detail the changing strategies of everyday practices in the village.

Chapter 2 "Who Are Relatives?"

Introduction

Zhaojiahe consists of a descent group based on agnatic ties and a common ancestor can be traced through a written genealogy. This immediately raises interesting questions concerning anthropological investigations of Chinese society, its kinship organisation in particular.

To follow J. Watson's argument (1982, 1986), anthropological models of Chinese kinship are basically drawn from field investigations in south China, focusing on lineage organisation[1] characteristic of corporate ownership of shared assets, particularly in the form of land. A general theoretical framework embedded in these models came from the pioneering work of Maurice Freedman (1958, 1966) who himself did little fieldwork on this matter. Freedman's work created a field in which new aspects of illuminating examination and re-examination of Chinese kinship - covering various topics such as family, marriage, adoption, ancestor worship - could have hardly been possible before (Watson 1986: 274-5). Kinship is no longer simply viewed in terms of principles of descent and methods of classification of kin but rather in terms of control and allocation of resources and formation of segmented descent groups (Ebrey and Watson 1986: 1-2).[2] Freedman's framework, in which a set of concepts were borrowed from Evans-Pritchard's (1940) and Fortes' (1945, 1953) works on segmented descent groups in Africa,[3] produced such a strong influence on later research of this type that it became, in Watson's term, a "lineage paradigm".[4]

Lineage in south China, as Freedman viewed it, is a corporate group which, through common property ownership, celebrates its group solidarity on the one hand and is differentiated, according to wealth, into segments on the other. In my view, Freedman's revolutionary contribution lies in his effort to show how the mechanic of segmentation within the group is dynamically carried out in response to a larger social context in which economic and political differentiation and domination are prevalent. The internal differentiation is therefore important for an understanding of the nature of lineage organisation in south China. To quote Ahern, "The heart of Freedman's view of internal lineage differentiation is that groups of agnates

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[1]For a brief reference for the emergence of the term 'lineage' in study of Chinese kinship, see Freedman 1979: 335.

[2]For an discussion of the emergence of Freedman's theory and his contribution to anthropological questioning in general, see Pasternak 1985b: 166-75.

[3]Anthropological investigation of descent groups started much earlier. For a critical review of lineage theory in anthropology, see Kuper 1982; also Fried 1957.

[4]A similar usage for this trend, 'the descent paradigm', was applied earlier by R. Watson 1981: 593. For seeking alternative structures of Chinese kinship organisation, see, for example, Harrell 1982; Pasternak 1969; R. Watson 1981, 1982; Wolf and Huang 1980; M. Wolf 1972. However, in view of the direct critique of Freedman's model, Hallgren and Y. Chen may be worth mentioning. With a complicated discussion about 'culture' or 'ideology', 'social system' and 'social organisation', in which Durkheim, Lévi-Strauss, Needham, Schneider, Dumont and the like are referred, Y. Chen (1985) challenges the idea of the corporate group which is intrinsic to the 'lineage paradigm' and suggests that corporation has to be explained by principles of descent rather than the other way around. To Y. Chen, the indigenous interpretation of the system precedes assumptions about economic exploration and co-operation. Hallgren (1979), following Bloch's theoretical premises, on the other hand, tries to expose the implicit contradiction in Freedman's framework and claims that the ideal and the real are by no means the same, which Freedman was often too vague to distinguish.

within lineages differentiate themselves according to relative wealth by setting aside corporate estates in the name of a common ancestor. The resulting segments are ritually demarcated by worship of the ancestor in whose name the corporate estate was established, perhaps in a hall built for that purpose; they are economically demarcated by the share that the members of each segment may have in the income from the corporate property" (1976: 1). Corporate activity (social organisation), descent identification (kinship principle), ancestor worship (ritual unity), economic practice (mercantile activity) and so forth are thus, through segmentation, synthesised into a functional-structural framework. It is important to notice that a key element in Freedman's analysis - no matter whether it is concerned with segmentation or with the link between lineage organisation and the wider social environment - is property and its ownership. As Pasternak wrote, "Freedman's generalised lineage model derives from the nature of Chinese property relations. The lineage does not exist if it is not incorporated. Internal segmentation too requires the establishment of corporate foci" (1985b: 190).

Among others, Taiwanese scholars' critique of the 'lineage paradigm' may deserve some attention since their views derive from a different position. For example, Q. Chen, aiming at a radical critique of western theory about Chinese kinship, argues that there is a distinction between genealogical aspects of descent principles and functional aspects of group activities.[5] Having criticised the usage of Chinese kinship terms such as *jia, zu, jiazu, zongzu, etc.* which have been widely employed in anthropological literature in the west, Chen argues that it is a mistake in translation to take *jia, zu, zong* and the like as core concepts in explaining Chinese kinship, and claims that this misunderstanding is too crucial to be neglected. He sees the selection of these terms as being rooted in the western anthropological premises rather than from a scrutiny of ethnographic materials and social reality of Chinese society. Instead, Chen has proposed a re-examination of Chinese kinship system with a focus on *fang*, which, to his belief, represents the core of kinship organisation in Chinese society, arguing that, by applying *jia, zu, jiazu, zongzu* as well as their English equivalents 'family', 'lineage', 'clan' and the like, western anthropologists have drowned themselves in a pool of utility and function. In contrast to the western anthropological 'functional model' *(gongneng moshi)*, Chen calls his own approach as 'genealogical model' *(xipu moshi)*. To Chen the genealogical aspect of descent in Chinese society, which he calls 'pure genealogical mentality' *(chun xipu linian)*, could not be reduced to its function as a descent group. In order to understand Chinese kinship organisation, one must start with the genealogical aspect of descent rather than the functional aspect which was emphasised by Freedman and his followers for decades,[6] according to Chen.

A slightly scary question is whether there is anything new in Q. Chen's claim that descent principles precede functional operations, which is similar to what Y. Chen (1984), another Taiwanese scholar, argued earlier. Is their view not an intellectual tradition which has existed

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[5]Reference here is made to Q. Chen's article (1985), which was a short version of his (unpub.) Ph.D Thesis titled 'Fang and Chia-tsu: The Chinese Kinship System in Rural Taiwan', Yale University.

[6]For his critique of Cohen on *jia* (family) and *jiachan* (family property), see Q. Chen 1985: 135-50; for his critique of Ahern on lineage membership and ancestor worship, see his 1985: 158-63; for his critique of J. Watson, Wolf and Huang on adoption, see his 1985: 165-7.

among Chinese scholars for centuries? Is this not exactly what Freedman tried to avoid and attack?[7]

Although Chinese scholars, who write within, often claim that their western counterparts misunderstand the indigenous discourses, in my view, both approaches share a common grounding which is based on what Bourdieu calls 'intellectualism'. As Bourdieu argues: "Intellectualism is inscribed in the fact of introducing into the object the intellectual relation to the object, of substituting the observer's relation to practice for the practical relation to practice" (1990: 34). My general critique is that, in so doing, both approaches are not able to account for the process in which representations or formal organisations of kinship are carried out as particular strategies of everyday practices.

Despite the different approaches outlined above, there is a problem of regional variations, for instance, the differences in kinship organisation between north and south China.[8] Based on both his own fieldwork in Yangmansa, a village in Xincheng County, Hebei Province, as well as historical materials, Cohen sets out to examine similarities and differences of lineage organisations between the south and the north, and he argues, "Although many elements of northern lineage organisation are found also in the southeast and elsewhere in China, they are combined in the north into a distinctive arrangement of cemeteries, graves, ancestral scrolls, ancestral tablets, and corporate groups linked to a characteristic annual ritual cycle" (1990: 509). To hold a descent group as a lineage, in contrast to the characteristic of common ownership in the south, Cohen maintains that, in the north, it is "the fixed genealogical mode most readily served as an expression of solidarity in the absence of significant corporate holdings" (1990: 510). According to Cohen, a characteristic annual cycle of genealogical activities can be found in the northern lineage organisation. This cycle involves a series of activities, that celebrate a solidarity, which is called by Cohen the 'associational solidarity', and includes four major elements: grave performance, tablets and scrolls establishment, the New Year celebration and Qingming commemoration. In contrast to lineage organisation in the southeast, in which relationships of the patrilineal descent group are based upon property, wealth, social standing and political status, 'associational solidarity' in the north is rather formal and equal. For instance, because the stress of descent is laid on the graveyard and the focal ancestral graves are hardly fixed in one cemetery position, a new segment, defined by choosing a new cemetery position, can happen at any genealogical point.

Cohen makes interesting comparisons between the south and the north but, again, this comparison is built on a grounding which does not allow us to take understanding, representation and discourse as practices. It provides, rather, a paradigmatic account, an

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[7]Only recently, scholars in mainland China have joined the discussion. However, in terms of approach, scholars in mainland China are by and large confined to the functional-structural analysis, though there is often no explicit reference to what has already been done by western anthropologists. For a representative discussion of the issue from mainland China, see Wang 1992: esp. 69-146.

[8]Some early materials may be useful for suggesting a difference between the south and the north in terms of the relationship between surname and village. Hu's survey came from Gao'an County, Jiangxi Province (South China), in which 1121 villages, that is 86.85% of the total number, were single surname ones (Hu 1948: 14). While, in Niida's (1952) investigation of Luancheng County, Shandong Province (North China), there was a quite different result. Villages in which there were one or two surnames took only 12.5% of the total number investigated, see Y. Chen 1984: 425, footnote 14. For a recent discussion on the problem of surname and village in Shaanxi, see 'Dui Cun de Sikao' ('Pondering on the notion of village') in *Shaanxi sheng nongcun shehui jingji diaocha* 1986.

interpretation, an intellectual exercise. It is by no means unnecessary but it leaves many questions unanswered. One of my central concerns in this chapter is to show how this approach fails to account for the process in which representations of kinship are embodied in everyday practices.

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In this chapter, I shall take kinship as a social practice. I shall start with a discussion of the way in which Zhao villagers articulate different kin relationships in their own terms. Although many, if not all, anthropologists working on China are aware of the ambiguities of Chinese kin terms and the difficulties of translation (see for instance Cohen 1970, Ebrey and Watson 1986), few have paid enough attention to the variations of these terms in regional dialects. The situation has changed little since McCoy made the claim that mandarin terms dominated much of the kinship materials published (1970: 210). I maintain that not only kin terms but also the way in which villagers talk about kin relations (i.e. the uses of kin terms) help us understand how kin relations are embodied in everyday practices.

A crucial characteristic of Zhao kin terms is that all of the kin terms used are also terms for describing their accommodation arrangements. In other words, kin terms are related to terms such as 'house', 'room' or 'courtyard'. As I shall argue, when Zhao villagers use these 'kin' terms, they are actually locating these relations in particular places within the village. This allows me to look at construction and arrangement of houses, rooms, courtyards and so forth as exercising kinship. Finally, in this chapter, I shall examine a specific problem that Zhao villagers have been facing since the 1980s: the increasing difficulties of bride recruitment from other villages.

2.1 "We are *zijiawu*, not relatives!"

In the first few weeks of my fieldwork, although I am a native Chinese, I constantly made a mistake by referring to a *zijiawu* ('one's own group') as a 'relative' *(qin-qi)*.[9] Wanyou, an old villager from Dawa, once even sounded a little disturbed: "What the hell are you talking about?! Yangkai is not my 'relative'! We are *zijiawu!*" I felt very embarrassed by repeating my mistake for quite a while. In Zhaojiahe, a basic kinship classification is made between *zijiawu* and 'relatives'. In order to understand this distinction, we need to examine carefully the core term *wu* which constitutes the basis of kinship in Zhaojiahe.

'Domestic group' is often referred to as 'family' to which the Chinese equivalent is *jia*.[10] For instance, as Ebrey and Watson write, "The term 'family' will be reserved for domestic groups, the basic unit of production, consumption, and political authority, whose members normally reside together and share a common budget for everyday expenses. In this sense it is largely synonymous with *chia (jia)* in its core meaning" (1986: 5). In Zhaojiahe, the equivalent term to describe the basic social unit is *wu*.

As a commonly used Chinese character, *wu* in its dictionary explanation means either 'house' or 'room'. In actual applications of this term on daily occasions, *wu* in many parts of

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[9] *Qin-qi* is a commonly used Chinese term which can be best translated as 'relative' or 'relatives'. However, I have never heard that, in other parts of north China, people actually use the word *zijiawu*.

[10] For some classic definitions of *jia*, see, for instance, M. C. Yang 1945: 45; Lang 1946: 13; Hu 1948: 15-6; Fei 1939: 27.

northern China is often employed in describing positions or locations within a house or a room. For instance, *li-wu/wai-wu* or *wu-li/wu-wai* are common usage to indicate 'inner-room/outer-room' or 'in-room/out-room'. In north China, to invite a guest to come to one's house, one will often say, *"Jin wu zuo"* ("Please come in and sit"), for example. Otherwise, the term *wu* is widely used in association with other Chinese characters to describe specific parts of a room or a house. For instance, *wu-ding* refers to 'roof', and *wu-yan* to 'eaves'. When talking about their wives, men may refer to women as "in-room persons" *(wu-li de)* in north China.

Zhao villagers use the term *wu* to signify the domestic group. In other words, 'house' or 'room' in use is no different from the people who live in it. When I heard the term *wu* used by Zhao villagers to mean 'family' for the first time, I was confused, because the meaning of the term to me had always been associated with images of actual, concrete buildings. In the third evening after my arrival in Dawa, I had a conversation with my host's wife, Yin'ai. She asked me: *"Ni wu ji kou ren?"* ("How many people are there in your 'family'?") I could not understand what she meant in the first instance. Only after her husband explained it to me, I was able to answer her question.

In all possible situations in which the term *jia* can be applied, it will be replaced by the term *wu* in Zhaojiahe. Four kinds of the most popular uses of the term are as follows: i) to refer to a group of people who are taken as a family. For instance, to ask the question 'How many people are there in your **family**?', Zhao villagers would say: *'Ni wu (jia) ji kou ren?'*; ii) to indicate the place in which the family live. For instance, when talking about whether someone has been back to his home, Zhao villagers would say, *'Ta hui wu (jia) le'* ('He went **home**'); iii) to use it as a pronoun to indicate a family group. For instance, when talking about themselves, Zhao villagers would say, *'Wo wu (jia) mei qian'* ('We are not rich'); iv) to refer to the household. For instance, when talking about the difference between different households, Zhao villagers would say, *'Yi wu (jia) yi yang'* ('It differs from one **household** to another').

The difference between Chinese term *jia* and English term 'family' has long been noticed. Almost half a century ago, Yang pointed out that there was no difference between the words for 'family' and 'home' in Chinese, and they were both called *jia*. As he wrote, "The same word stands for both - people living under the same roof, for a group of people is not a family unless they have a permanent house, one which they own" (1945: 46). There can be no more convincing proof than the example of Zhaojiahe for Yang's observation. A family in Zhaojiahe is simply referred to as a house or a room. The shelter signifies the people who live in it. In other words, blood relations are talked about in terms of houses and rooms. What are the implications of this potential link between kin and housing in practice?

When Zhao villagers talk about settlement, they will first of all comment upon whether one is able to find a place to live. In comparison to accommodation, land is given less significance. According to Zhao villagers, there had been plenty of wild hills around the village which could be cultivated into arable land during the pre-communist period. One did not need to worry too much about land at that time but one had to consider whether one could find a place to stay and obtain appropriate tools for agricultural production. It was partially due to the fact that Zhao villagers used to have very low productivity - one villager could only look after a few *mu* area of

land - and partially because the village population did not increase rapidly before 1949. Therefore, during the pre-communist period, it was shelter rather than land that determined whether a family could be established. This situation changed during the period of people's communes. Population increased rapidly after the communists came to power (1949) and less uncultivated land was available around the village. But, during the period of people's communes, land was collectively owned and used, and no villager would care about the quality and quantity of land since income was distributed according to their contributions of labour. From a historical point of view, we can be fairly certain that, as a form of property, land might not be as significant as housing for Zhao villagers.

Anthropologists have long noticed that, as an institution, Chinese family can mean different things. For instance, as Cohen wrote, "the property-holding unit known in Chinese as the *chia* - which has generally been identified as the 'family' - was actually a kin group that could display a great deal of variation in residential arrangements as well as in the economic ties that bound its members together" (1970: 21).[11] More recently, Wolf and Huang, with materials from rural Taiwan, make it more clear than ever that "what is usually taken to be one institution is in fact a composite of three institutions: the ke, the descent line, and what Margery Wolf calls 'the uterine family'" (1980: 57). The ke is the stove which signifies the basic social unit of production and consumption. That is, those who live and work together. The descent line, as one institution of family, concerns property relations which are dominated by patrilineal principles. The 'uterine family' is constituted by a practical circle of relationships based upon mother-children relations.

Wolf and Huang's observation is important and it is worth quoting them at length:

> In sum, we see that what is generally referred to as the Chinese family is a composite of three interdependent but analytically distinct organizations. Setting aside the women and looking at the family from the viewpoint of its place in the kinship system, one sees a core composed of the men linked by descent and rights in property. It was with reference to this core that men related to their dead ancestors and the past and to their children and the future. A shift from this kinship perspective to that taken by the community and the state brings together another aspect of the family into focus. The relevant institution is then the ke, the basic unit of production and consumption, which included women as well as men. Whereas the line spanned time and included the dead as well as the living, the ke located the family in space and regulated its relations with the community, the government, and the supernatural bureaucracy. Finally, when one gives life to these institutional views by admitting the bonds of sentiment formed in childhood, one sees that the family has still a third aspect. Crosscutting the jurally defined lines of the men are other solidary groups composed of women and their children. Though less obvious to the eye trained for ritual detail and the ear attuned to forms of address, these groups were nonetheless real and exerted a powerful impact on decisions concerning marriage and adoption (1980: 64-5).

In Zhaojiahe, there are also three different aspects of *wu*, which are signified by three different terms. The first aspect is the descent line. A specific term, that is *zijiawu*, is applied for referring to a descent group. The term *zijiawu* consists of three Chinese characters: *'zi'*, *'jia'*, *'wu'*. Literally, *zi* can be translated as 'my', 'mine', or 'self', 'myself'; *jia*, which is seldom used by itself in the village, as 'family'; and *wu*, which we have just discussed, as an aggregation of different things deriving its meaning from the term 'house' or 'room'. To put them together, *zi-jia-wu* can

[11]For an earlier discussion of four types of families, see Kulp 1924: 24f.

be crudely translated as "my-own-group". 'My-own-group' is a group whose members share the same house or room or, precisely, *come* from the same house or room. That is to say, Zhao villagers identify themselves as kin by way of tracing the house or room from which they come. However, *zijiawu* is applied to only Zhao males. Because all Zhao villagers share a common ancestor, that is, they came originally from the same house or room, Zhao villagers could take Zhaojiahe as one big *zijiawu*. Property and membership are inherited within *zijiawu*. All Zhao daughters are supposed to marry out and *zijiawu* exogamy, which was for a long time the same as village exogamy, is supposed to be practised. It is worth noting that the term *zijiawu* is different from terms such as descent group or lineage, because *zijiawu*, when used in daily life, presupposes a social position from which a person speaks.

A further distinction is made by Zhao villagers between far *(yuan) zijiawu* and close *(jin) zijiawu*. A close *zijiawu* is most commonly defined by brotherhood of the second descending generation (sometimes the third descending generation). That is, brotherhood defined by sharing a common grandfather or great-grandfather. In mandarin, this is called *shu-bo xong-di*. In the local dialect, it sounds *shu-bei xong-di*. When Zhao villagers talked about *zijiawu*, it often referred to the notion of 'close *zijiawu*'. In terms of its social functions, 'close *zijiawu*' defines a group who help each other in ceremonial activities. On the other hand, the notion of 'far *zijiawu*' has little practical significance.

Like that in other parts of China, a family (i.e. a *wu*) will be divided when the sons get married. This is how a *wu* gradually grows into a *zijiawu*. Persons from the same *zijiawu* are not supposed to marry each other and they should marry with those from other *zijiawu*. Before the late 1970s, Zhao villagers were exclusively exogamous. Zhao villagers exchanged brides with their neighbouring villages of different surnames. Relationships obtained through marriage ties are called *qinqi*, that is, 'relatives'. Formally, two groups of kin are defined as those who come from the same room and those who do not, that is *zijiawu* and relatives. This is a basic distinction: men are supposed to stay in the village and women are supposed to move between villages. By way of moving women around - Lévi-Strauss would feel comfortable with this, Zhao villagers create and establish their networks of social relations in the neighbouring villages. This distinction also defines two kinds of kin relations by the way in which each of these relations is made: *zijiawu* are given and relatives are made.

There are three identifiable, important categories of relatives in the village. They are respectively relatives from one's mother's side, relatives from one's wife's side and relatives from one's married-out daughter's side. The relatives from one's mother's side is called *wei-jia*.[12] Although none of these relatives are granted any right to claim the Zhao *zijiawu's* membership or properties, they play extremely important roles in social and economic co-operation.

Membership and inheritance of property are two basic elements for social continuity in the Chinese family (see for instance Fei 1939: 31-2). When talking about inheritance or property relations, Zhao villagers often employed the term *yuanzi* ('courtyard'), which, as a common usage in north China, usually includes a series of rooms, shelters and other spaces. Like *wu* symbolises

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[12]For a discussion of the significance of this group of relatives, see Chapter 6.

kin relations, *yuanzi* symbolises the property relations among *zijiawu* brothers. For instance, once when an old villager who had no male descendant left in the village talked about his worries, he said to me: "I do not know what I should do, I can not leave Zhaojiahe, because my *yuanzi* (i.e. property) is here. My brother who lives in a city has asked me to live with him for a long time, but I can not go. What about my *yuanzi?* We villagers have only our *yuanzi* as our family property."

When Zhao villagers talked about how much property one owns, they would talk about it in terms of how much one's *yuanzi* is worth. When a marriage is negotiated between two families, as a formal step of the marriage process, the bride and her parents would go to visit the bridegroom's family for the purpose of checking the quality of his *yuanzi.*[13] If a villager left the village without selling his *yuanzi,* others would comment on it by saying that he would sooner or later be back since his *yuanzi* ('his property') was still in the village. Family division is also talked about in terms of dividing one's *yuanzi.* For instance, once a villager from Dawa talked to me about how he divided his two *yuanzi* among his three sons. In order to avoid inequality and unfairness, he told me that, after several nights' serious consideration, he had decided to give each of his sons half a *yuanzi.* He himself held the remaining half.

As I said earlier, a place in which one lives is given a greater significance than land in Zhaojiahe. When talking about whether one was better off than others in the past, Zhao villagers would mention two things: quality of his *yuanzi* and quantity of his draught animals. Land was seldom mentioned.

The third aspect of *wu* is *yao* ('cave dwelling') which is the most important and primary unit of a *yuanzi.* There is no *yuanzi* without a *yao* in the village. To build a *yao,* sometimes a pair of *yao,* is always the starting point of building a *yuanzi.* Similar to the symbolic function of the stove described by Wolf and Huang, *yao* defines the domestic group whose members share a common budget and reside together. For instance, Zhao villagers would say: "People from our *yao* like eating steamed bread with lots of hot pepper". The difference between *yuanzi* and *yao,* when employed in daily conversations, is that *yuanzi* refers to a *wu* as a common-owner group but *yao* refers to a *wu* as a domestic group.

The group defined by the *yao* is similar to that of 'ke' in rural Taiwan. Members of a *yao* possess a common *yuanzi,* keep a common budget and cooperate together to pursue a common living through familial division of labour. It is the basic social unit of production and consumption.

* * *

What implications can we draw from the above discussion? There are several points that I want to make. Firstly, *wu,* rather than *jia,* constitutes the core of kinship imagination in Zhaojiahe. This usage associates kinship with housing arrangements rather than consanguinity or affinity. The implication is that, to Zhao villagers, kinship is not only a system of classification but a practical arrangement suited to survival and continuity. As I argue, to Zhao villagers, an ideological aspect of kinship is embodied in the practice of kinship. Secondly, unlike notions such

[13]For a discussion of this practice, see the following chapter.

as 'descent group' or 'lineage', *zijiawu* is rather a spatial metaphor that stresses kinship as sharing or coming from a same room or house. The implication is that, to Zhao villagers, a 'descent group' has to be defined by what they share and what they do in daily life. Thirdly, both property relations and domestic groups are talked about in terms of specific housing arrangements. House, home, settlement, locality are of primary importance for Zhao villagers to articulate their idea of kinship. This indicates that kinship is what has to be done rather than simply articulations.

In order to understand the significance of kinship in the village life, we need to look closely at how *zijiawu, yuanzi* and *yao* are actually organised, built and used. I argue that Zhao kinship can be understood only by a close inspection of the actual practical arrangements by which kin terms are given their meanings.

In the above discussion, we have followed the way in which Zhao villagers use these kin terms. But this notion of 'Zhao villagers' presupposes a male subject who speaks for only male members of the village. This is not to say that Zhao women, wives and daughters, have another set of kin terms, but that kin terminology as a discourse is authored by Zhao males. Zhao women follow their husbands' or fathers' usage of kin terms. For instance, a Zhao woman would say: "Yangkai is my children's father's *zijiawu* brother." There is no difference between the two sexes in employing the term *yuanzi* and *yao*, though it is often Zhao males who speak out in public about issues concerning family divisions. We have also noticed that, among the three terms - *zijiawu, yuanzi and yao*, it is only the term *yao* that is supposed to include both male and female members of a kin group (based on agnatic ties). The other two terms implicitly exclude Zhao women. However, this does not mean that relations tied by marriage are less significant. On the contrary, affinal relationships have been given a tremendous significance in the past decade by Zhao villagers. This discussion only shows that there might be a gap between what is articulated in public and what is actually done in practice.

2.2 *Zijiawu, Yuanzi* and *Yao*

Zijiawu

Zijiawu defines both a kin group and a territorial group. The preference to build a new *yuanzi* or *yao* for one's sons is always as close to one's own place as possible, although there are cases in which some villagers have to move away from their original dwelling sites. *Yuanzi* are built in rows leaning onto hills. When there is no space for more houses in a row, Zhao villagers move away from their dwelling sites to find another site to build new houses. In general, the closer is one's house to another; the closer is one's relationship to the other. It is very often that close *zijiawu* occupy a row of houses and brothers have houses next to each other.

Those who live nearby are formally addressed in kin terms. That is to say, traditionally, those who live close to each other first see themselves as kinsmen rather than neighbours. Articulation of kinship still dominated many aspects of social life. The only formal occasion in which neighbours are given explicit reference concerns food presentation for newly born babies. In Zhaojiahe, one is supposed to present a special kind of steamed bread to one's neighbour's little babies during the period of the Chinese New Year. This is the occasion on which Zhao

villagers use the term 'neighbour' *('lin-jia')*. There is no clear definition for the scope of neighbourhood and it all depends upon choices made by individual families. For instance, in Dawa, some insisted that the whole villager group should be viewed as neighbours; while others said to me that only those households which were close to them should be counted as neighbours.

In recent years, however, the notion of neighbourhood has started to be used on many informal occasions to articulate a certain kind of social relationships, which is mainly concerned about ceremonial celebrations such as weddings and funerals. For these occasions, Zhao villagers use the notion of 'neighbourhood' *(lin-jia)* rather than *zijiawu* brothers to indicate those who come to help. It is worth pointing out that these celebrations had been forbidden during the radical years of the Maoist revolution and revived in the past fifteen years. The social transformation, taking place in rural China in the past decade, has started to be reflected in the way in which the networks of social relationships in the village are defined and used.

Zijiawu defines a kin group whose members share or come from the same house or room. This idea of kinship allows Zhao villagers a great deal of freedom in making practical arrangements in order to create a *zijiawu*. Because kinship is not tied to blood, Zhao villagers see no difficulty in making adoptions and uxorilocal marriage as means of having 'brothers'. In fact, there is a large number of households that has experienced adoption or uxorilocal marriage. I want to stress the significance of this conceptual freedom derived from the notion of *wu* and *zijiawu* in making adoptions and uxorilocal marriage.

Before the communists came to power, as I was told, there were two organised activities that signified the whole village as one big *zijiawu*. One was the regular ceremonies of remembrance of the ancestors, which were carried out in the ancestral halls being destroyed during the Great Leap Forward. The ancestral hall was maintained by a fund collected from each household every year.[14] The other was that there was a village refuge-castle, built collectively on the top of a nearby hill, which was used by all Zhao villagers to escape the raids and attacks of the war lords or Guomindang troops. After the communists seized power in 1949, the village refuge-castle was abandoned. And soon, in 1958, the ancestral hall was destroyed. During the Maoist era, to take the whole village as one *zijiawu* seemed to be of little practical significance. Zhaojiahe was turned into part of a people's commune in 1958 and the village had functioned as an economic and political organisation for twenty years since then. Under the organisation of the people's commune, Zhao villagers were united more tightly than ever in their history but kinship no longer represented the symbolic order of such a unity. Terms such as *renmin gongshe* ('people's commune'), *dadui* ('production brigade'), *xiaodui* ('production team') replaced the notion of *zijiawu* to dominate articulations of social relationships.

Alongside the instalment of the 'agricultural responsibility system' in 1981, there are several changes taking place in the village. Among other things, there is a revival of wedding and death celebrations. Although the household is assigned to be the basic unit of production and consumption, the village celebrations have gone far beyond family boundaries and become

[14]Zhao villagers did not remember that they had any common land holding before 1949.

collective activities across even village boundaries. There are two tendencies that accompany this change. First, close *zijiawu* start to act as groups of economic co-operation and political alliance. This is partially because members of close *zijiawu* usually live nearby and economic co-operation is the easiest among these members. Second, a set of new categories of social relationships such as neighbourhood and colleagueship have started to emerge. Especially among the young generations, the new categories of social relations have become widely accepted.

* * *

I agree with the view that there are several related but different institutions within the Chinese family (Wolf and Huang 1980). I argue that the wider socio-economic changes may not have made an equal impact on these different aspects of family. In the case of Zhaojiahe, it is evident that the organisation of larger kin groups, signified by the notion of *zijiawu*, has been most effectively modified through the communist history, but this does not necessarily mean that other aspects of *wu* (the family) have been affected in the same way. As I shall argue below, in the case of Zhaojiahe, the dramatic socio-economic changes sweeping through the whole period of Maoist era had little effect on the other two aspects of *wu*. Zhaojiahe may not appear to be a *zijiawu* (a descent group) any more but the strategies in organising the *yuanzi* (the common property owning group) and *yao* (the domestic group) have changed little.

Yuanzi

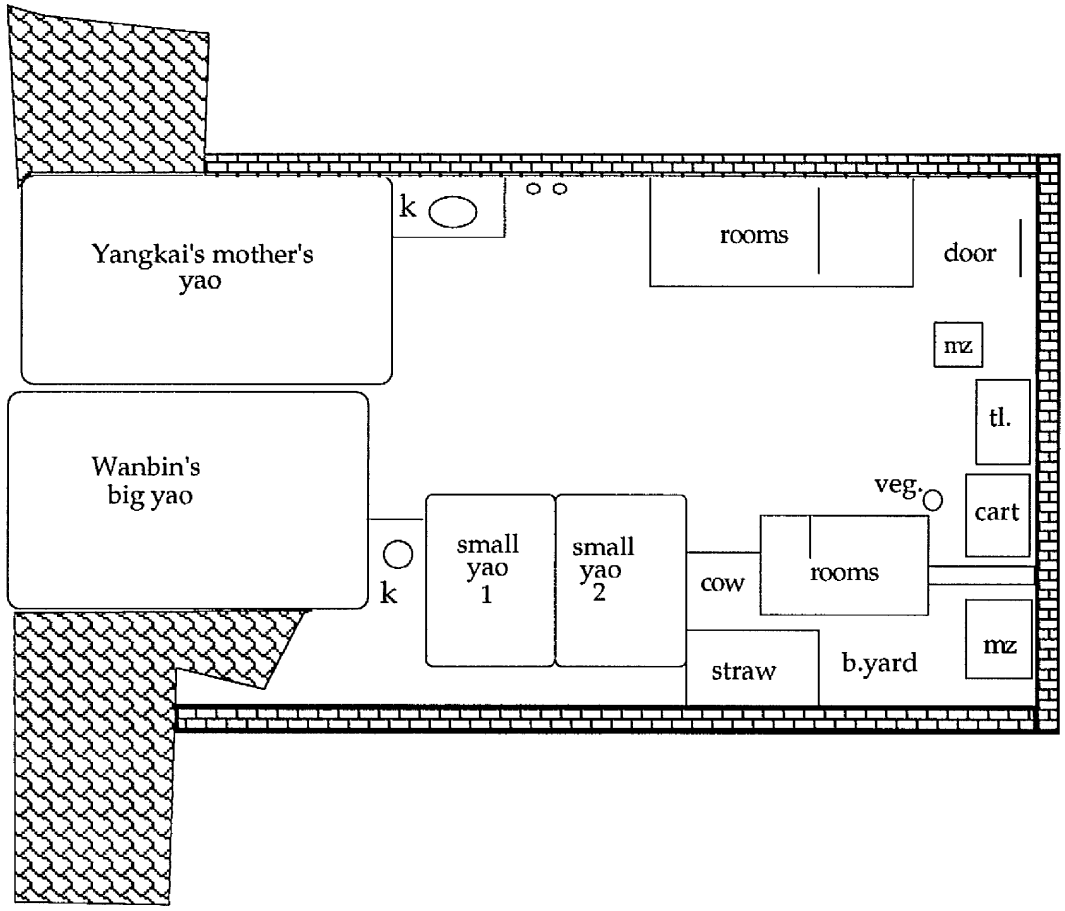
Yuanzi ('courtyard') is a compound consisting of a series of shelters and other forms of homestead arrangements. *Yao* and rooms are built in circle surrounding a yard in the middle. The arrangement of *yuanzi* from one household to another may be slightly different but the social functions that it maintains are the same. I will introduce Wanbin's - my first host in the village - *yuanzi* as an example. Wanbin is thought to be a good farmer and his wife is thought to be a good housewife. Wanbin himself claimed that his family was moderately prosperous. The arrangement of Wanbin's *yuanzi* is shown in Figure 1.

Wanbin shares his *yuanzi* with his father's elder brother's wife. So his *yuanzi* is divided into two parts in the middle. The upper part in the figure belongs to Yangkai's mother who lived by herself, though three of her sons were living nearby in Dawa. It is not uncommon to share a courtyard with one's close *zijiawu*, although it became less popular in the past ten years. Wanbin's family occupies the lower part of the courtyard in the figure, which consists of a big *yao*, two small *yaos*, two rooms, a cow shed, an outside kitchen, a small back yard with a toilet in it, a cart shelter and a tool storage straw shed.

The big yao, which is used as a bedroom by Wanbin, his wife, and his mother, as well as one of his granddaughters, is the family centre. All important daily activities are carried out in it. Both cooking and eating, which are the most significant events in daily life, take place in the big *yao*. One of the most important food preparations, that is, making steamed bread, also takes place in the big *yao*. The big *yao* is also used as an appropriate place for entertaining visitors or guests. The big *yao* is used as well as a storage room in which grains and other valuable goods are carefully kept. Zhao villagers would feel panic at the thought that a *yao* is left without people. No matter what kind of emergent or important events take place, they will always try to keep at least

one person as a guard in their *yao*. For instance, in May 1992, when Wanbin's daughter was preparing to get married in the county town which was thirty kilometres away from the village, the whole family spent several evenings to discuss who was going to be left at home. Yin'ai, Wanbin's wife, repeated: "*Yao mo ren bu xing* ('No way, there cannot be nobody in our *yao*')". For women, especially in winter, the *yao* is used for sewing and weaving. Children are literally brought up in the *yao* and it is also a family recreation centre.

Figure 1. Wanbin's Yuanzi



mz = maozi
k = kitchen
veg. = vegetable cellar
tl. = tool shed

In Wanbin's *yuanzi*, there is a small kitchen just outside the big *yao* and it is used for cooking in summer when the weather it is too hot to cook inside. Two small *yao* were built in 1978 when Wanbin's second son, Xincang, was preparing to get married. One of the small *yao* was Xincang and his wife's bedroom in which there were only a brick-bed and a pair of chests. No cooking or other necessary facilities were held in this small *yao*. The other small *yao* was used as a storage room in which two bicycles, raw cotton in big plastic bags, several pieces of furniture and chemical fertilisers were kept. Next to the two small *yao*, there is a cow shed. Wanbin had a cow

which was the most important means of agricultural production. All transportation for both productive or non-productive purposes relied upon the cow. In the two small rooms next to the cow shed, the left one was used, again, for storage. Hoes, spades and other handy tools were kept there when I was in the village. It was also used for storing sundry goods such as plastic bags. The other room was prepared for guests. During the first three months of my fieldwork, I stayed in this room which was freezing in winter - about zero during the daytime.[15] There is a toilet on the left hand inside the *yuanzi* door, which is called *maozi* in the local language. The *maozi*, walled by mud at the height of a man's waist, is simply a pit on the ground. After one finishes using it, one will put some clods with a spade into the pit, which would be used fertiliser later. This *maozi* behind the courtyard door was owned by Yangkai's mother. Wanbin's *maozi* was in the corner of his back yard. During the whole period of my fieldwork, I never saw that any member of Wanbin's *wu* using Yangkai's mother's *maozi*. There are two straw sheds outside the back yard, which are used for keeping a cart and other heavy agricultural tools such as an iron plough. In front of the straw sheds, there is a deep cellar on the ground covered by a huge piece of stone. The cellar is used for storing fresh vegetables. Straw is kept in the other end of the back yard for the cow.

In Zhaojiahe, *yuanzi* are built in connection to each other in rows. All *yuanzi* are fenced by mud walls of two metres or so in height. In front of a *yuanzi* there is a pavement and, sometimes, there are trees on the other side of the pavement. Dirty water and other domestic rubbish are brought out of the *yuanzi* door and thrown onto the other side of the pavement to be absorbed by nature. The back of a *yuanzi* is always built into a hill so that it cannot be seen from outside.

There are several points that need to be made here. Firstly, the idea of storage is very important to the notion of *yuanzi*. There are so many places which are designed and used for storage in a courtyard. Everything has to be stored and re-used in some way, and nothing seems to be useless and needs to be thrown away. Except for dirty water, there are very few things Zhao villagers would actually throw away. This is the reason that there is no particular place designed for rubbish collecting and processing. This may suggest a link between the idea of property and the way in which it is obtained. That is to say, property has to be saved. Secondly, a *yuanzi* has to be walled like a castle. The division between the inside and outside is very clear. Thirdly, there is no clear division between production and consumption in terms of spatial division. A *yuanzi* is a complex whole which embraces everything.

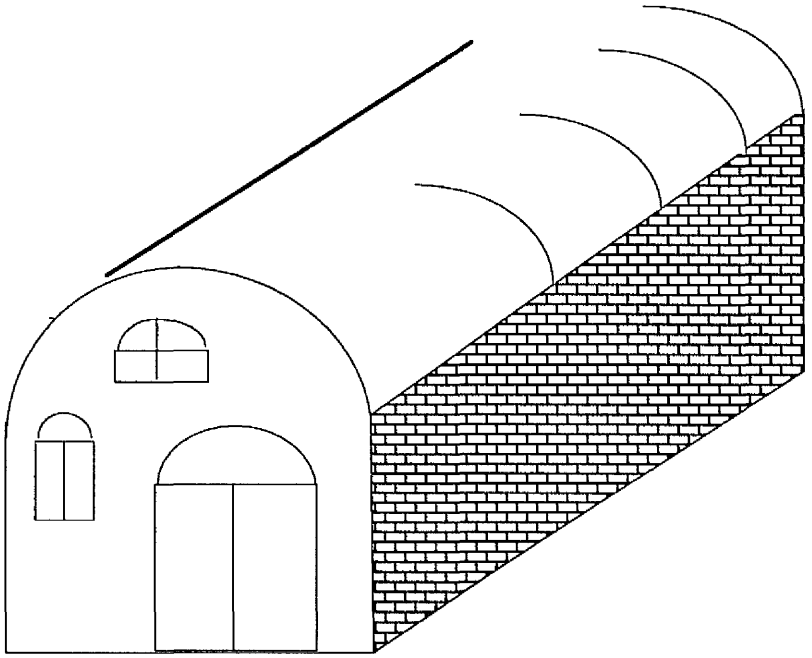
Yao

The *yao* is the core of a *yuanzi*. When a new *yuanzi* was needed for their son's marriage, Zhao villagers would often say, *"gei wa gu-ge yao"* ("let us hoop our son a *yao*"). This actually means: to build a new *yuanzi* for one's son. It is interesting to note that to build a *yao* is called "to hoop" *(gu)* in the village. Literally, the verb *gu* is 'to be caught' or 'to be fixed firmly'. This means that a *yao* has to be 'hooped' onto a hill. This stress given to the firmness of their houses may

[15] I remember those hopeless moments when I had to sit inside organising my notes while watching the sunshine glittering outside. It was quite warm outside even in the winter when there was sunshine. Inside the room, I put everything I had brought with me on to keep myself warm but was still shivering. The cold had accompanied me for more than two months.

reflect Zhao villagers' reluctance towards moving and travelling.[16] As a domestic group, *yao* defines those who reside together and pursue a common livelihood. The usual distinction between *jia* (i.e. family) and *hu* (i.e. household)[17] is of little significance in Zhaojiahe, since there is no villager who lives for a long period of time in another villager's *yao*.

Figure 2. The Shape of a Yao



Yao (i.e. the cave dwelling)[18] is thought by Zhao villagers to be the best form of accommodation. According to them, because a *yao* is built into a cliff leaving only one side facing the outside, it is cool inside in summer and warm in winter. The shape of a *yao*, shown by Figure 2, looks like an enlarged loaf of bread, though it can not be seen from outside after its construction is finished. Before 1949, according to Zhao villagers, most *yao* in the village were dirt ones which were simply caves dug into hills. Aged women recalled that, when they were cooking in the past, large pieces of clod and mud might suddenly drop down from the ceiling into their cooking woks. Even worse, heavy rains in the past might destroy the dirt *yao* and bring dangerous consequences for people who lived in them. After the communists came to power in 1949, the dirt *yao* were gradually replaced by the brick *yao*. Ninety five percent of *yao* which were used by Zhao villagers in 1991-1992 was made of brick. A few dirt *yao* left in the village were mainly used for sheltering animals.

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[16]See my discussion of this issue in Chapter 1.

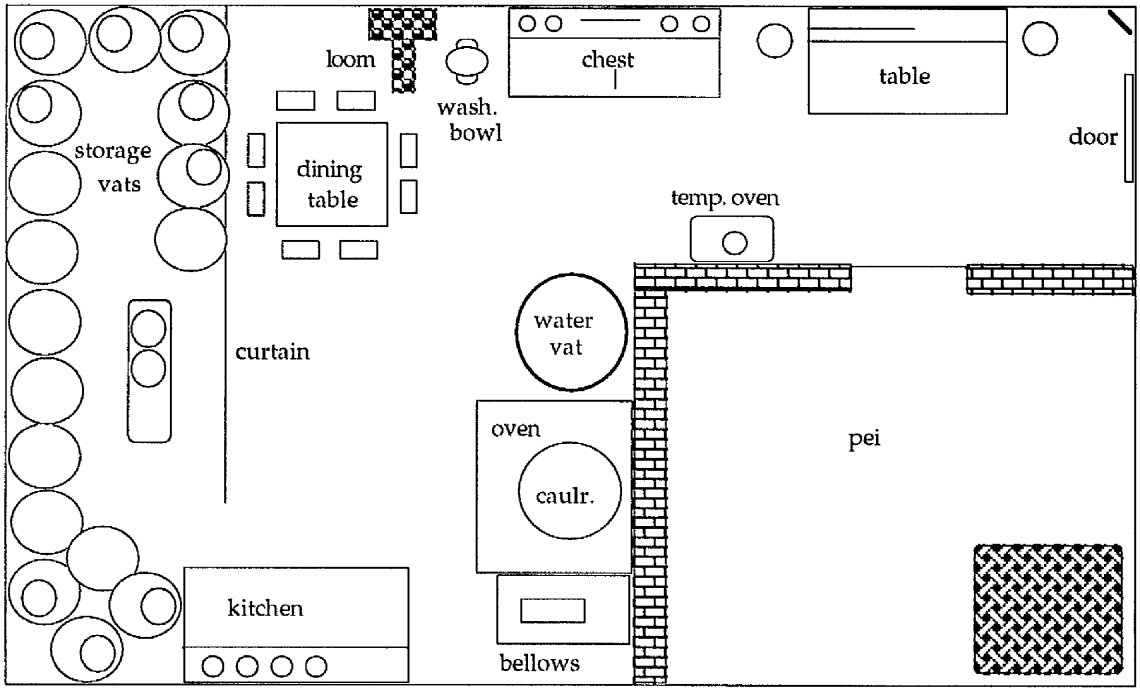
[17]For a discussion of the notion of *hu* and the significance of territorial group, see Fei 1939: 95-9; Chao 1983: 15-6.

[18]As Liu wrote from the viewpoint of architecture, "The cave dwelling is a special kind of house found in the loess area along the Yellow River in the north-western part of China, where rainfall is scanty and timber scarce. The caves were dug into a loess cliff providing a dwelling with a narrow facade and extending into the cliff. The vaulted ceiling was sometimes strengthened by inner brick vaulting. ... Since the cave dwelling had only one side facing the outside, there was insufficient daylight and poor ventilation." 1989: 179.

The front side of a *yao*, which is the only part that can be seen after the finish of its construction, is called *yao mian zi* (literally, 'yao face'). Even in the past, when most *yao* were made of clod and mud, some of those '*yao* faces' were decorated with a few bricks. Nowadays, the best bricks will be used for the *yao* face. When building a *yao*, a great deal of attention is given to the decoration of the *yao* face. No exception, there are three openings on a 'yao face': a door, a top window and a main window.

The interior arrangement within a *yao* deserves attention. Let us take Wanbin's big *yao* as an example (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Wanbin's Yao: Interior Arrangement



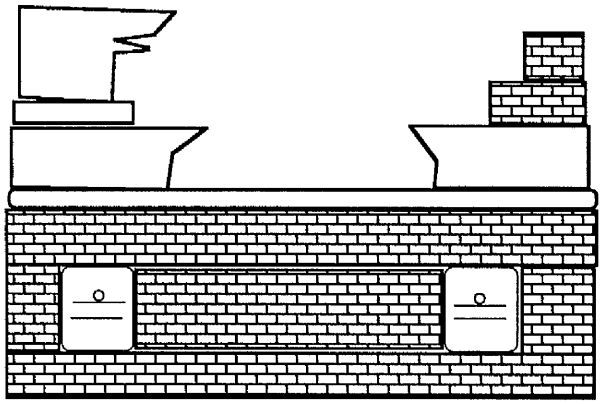
Wanbin's *yao* is about fifty square metres in size, that is about ten metres in length and five metres in width, which is normal. Beside the door and under the window, there is a huge brick-bed which is called *pei* in Zhaojiahe.[19] The location of a *pei* within a *yao* is always the same: under the main window. Wanbin's *pei* is big enough for seven or eight persons to sleep on it at one time and this is by no means exceptional. The *pei*, which is made of bricks and can be heated inside, occupies a large space in a *yao*. A *pei* is often seventy to eighty centimetres high with two small openings in front for bed-heating (see Figure 4). Wheat straw is the main form of fuel for warming the bed. There is no other form of heating in the *yao* apart from heating the bed. There is a brick fence to wall the bed leaving only a small dent in front for people to get on and off. This fence is mainly used for keeping babies from dropping out of the bed.

A big brick oven is built in connection with the *pei*. There is a huge cauldron fixed on the top of the oven, which is used for everyday cooking. Steaming and boiling are two ordinary

[19]In other parts of China, the brick bed used in countryside is often called *kang*.

means of cooking. Frying is seldom needed. To use the oven, one needs to burn wood or coal underneath the cauldron. There is a bellows beside the oven. In Zhaojiahe, to cook is called 'to burn the oven' *(shao-huo)*. The kitchen, which is just a huge plank on which cooking facilities and ingredients are kept, is next to the oven. Underneath the plank, there are coal and wood kept as fuel. In Wanbin's *yao*, there is a square, short-leg table opposite the kitchen plank, and the table is surrounded by short-leg benches. This is where daily meals are served. A huge water vat is situated beside the oven.

Figure 4. The Front of a Pei



Opposite the *pei* there is a table with two chairs. There is a red colour chest beside the table in Wanbin's *yao*, which is used for keeping all their valuables such as sweets, cloth, cash, etc. Next to the chest, there is a washing bowl set on a bench and a loom next to it. When I was staying with Wanbin's family, there was a huge, beautifully made calendar hanging on the wall near the loom. The calendar pictures were all huge, heavily painted faces of Hong Kong and Taiwanese actresses, smiling at the dark room. Further inside, there is a plastic curtain which cuts the inside one-third of the *yao* into a unseen part. There are seventeen big vats behind the curtain for storing wheat and other grains. There are also more than twenty small vats on top of the big ones for storing flour or steamed bread.

A *yao* is a whole in the sense that it synthesises many functions for different purposes. Firstly, a *yao* is a bedroom where all family members can sleep together.[20] Part of the reason for them to do so is that to warm only one bed may save some wheat straw for other purposes. In Wanbin's case, it was often four persons of three generations sleeping in the main *yao*. They were Wanbin's mother, Wanbin and his wife, and Wanbin's granddaughter. Secondly, a *yao* is a kitchen. Daily preparation of food and consumption of everyday meals take place in a *yao*. Young couples, although they may have their own rooms in which to sleep, always eat together with

[20]It may not be unusual for one to sleep together with one's son and daughter-in-law on a main *pei*. It is not unusual for more than two couples to sleep in the same bed, often together with their grandsons and granddaughters.

their parents in the main *yao*. Daily meals are times when family members get together and share the food. Thirdly, a *yao* is a recreation centre. When returning from the field, male members of a family would come into their *yao* to smoke their water pipes and play with their children. Fourthly, as one of the most important functions, a *yao* is a storage house. As I have said, all valuables are kept in the *yao*. Grains are saved in big vats in the back of a *yao*. Other things such as cash and important papers like, for instance, wedding gift lists have to be kept inside a *yao*. Wheat, coal and water are all kept inside a *yao*.

A *yao* is a whole in terms of its social functions but, internally, there are several spatial divisions, which reflect three dimensions of social relationships: men versus women, parents versus children, and hosts versus guests. Women, often together with children, cling to the *pei* on which they work, rest and eat. The brick-bed is used for food preparation, which constitutes one of the most important tasks for women. Other kinds of women's works such as sewing and spinning are also done on the bed. Little children are always kept on the bed, and it is often elder women who have to stay in the bed constantly to look after the little children. When a woman comes back from the field, she will immediately sit on the bed. When a meal is served, women also have it on the bed. The table is always left for men. Men sit down and eat at the table, while women and children either lean or sit on the bed while eating. After the meal, male members of a family will move to sit at another table, smoking and chatting. During the day time, a man seldom sits on the bed. Not only the bed but also the space alongside the kitchen and oven are usually occupied by women, particularly by the wife of the house as well as the daughter-in-law.

In respect to the relationship between parents and children, one needs first to distinguish two kinds of children, that is, small children and adult children. As in other parts of China, there is usually one adult child who lives with his parents. Until the adult child and his wife replace the role of their parents, there is no significant difference between father and son in terms of uses of internal space. The son does what his father does, because they are both men. However, as far as small children, who are often grandsons and granddaughters of the house, are concerned, the situation is different. Small children do not have fixed places in a *yao* and they are free to move from one place to another. That is, from their mother or grandmother to father or grandfather. Small children are supposed to have their meals on the bed, but they in fact often run into their grandfather's arms. In a sense, small children are links between two territories defined by gender.

There are also relatively stable patterns of entertaining guests in terms of uses of space in a *yao*. A male guest is always invited to sit beside the table, being offered either cigarettes or the water pipe, dependent upon who he is. A female guest will be automatically allowed a place on the bed. A guest will not enter the inner space unless he or she is invited for a meal.[21]

* * *

Yuanzi and *yao* are both kin terms and actual housing arrangements. To Zhao villagers, there is no separation between an articulation of kinship and its actual economic, social and political functions. The two sides of kinship, its representation and its actual functioning, are mutually constitutive. Studies on Chinese kinship have so far focused on its representations,

[21]There will be more discussions about the host-guest relationship in later chapters, especially in Chapter 4 and 7.

either local or national. As I have shown in the above discussion, kin terms have their practical meanings in everyday life. Unless we look closely at what these practical meanings are and how they can be applied in everyday occasions, we will not be able to understand the social significance of kinship. It is a starting point to look at kin terms but kin terms in turn have to be understood as action and practice.

Instead of focusing on the principles of kinship, I argue that one should examine carefully specific strategies of everyday kinship practice, for instance the spatial arrangements within a house as I discussed regarding the *yao*. Especially in the case of rural China, scholarly attention has often been drawn to the large-scale social transformations and their impacts on family or kinship (see for instance C. K. Yang 1959; Davis and Harrell 1993); there is a large space for us to investigate the changing strategies of everyday kinship practice. Instead of focusing on the socio-economic relations of kinship, we may need to examine changes in spatial arrangements within a house and compare the present form of arrangement with the past, to see what the implications are.

2.3 'The Marriage Crisis'

Formal organisation of kinship in Zhaojiahe follows the principles of patrilineal descent and virilocal marriage. During childhood both male and female children are cared for by their parents. Both assume their father's surname but, when they grow up and get married, the son will continue to live in Zhaojiahe and the daughter is supposed to leave her parents and join her husband.[22] Since Zhao villagers took Zhaojiahe as a *zijiawu*, for a long time Zhao villagers had maintained exact village exogamy. Village exogamy was practised until the late 1970s. In the 1980s, intra-village marriage became a dominant form of mate choice. What happened? Does this change reflect certain characteristics of the general transformation taking place in rural China since the late 1970s?

Many have long noticed that a residential propinquity remains a basic rule for mate selection in rural Chinese communities.[23] This observation is applicable to Zhaojiahe. Most Zhao brides have been recruited from the neighbouring villages and the scope of this locality does not extend beyond a distance of more than twelve kilometres. As a matter of fact, apart from Qincheng, a village lying in the opposite side of the Dayu valley, the geographical circle of bride recruitment has been by and large restricted to Leijiawa township (see Map 7). With respect to provenance of bride recruitment, a very clear tendency took place during the period of the economic reforms: the *yuanxia* neighbouring villages replaced the *yuanshang* neighbouring villages[24] as the main recruitment area for Zhao villagers. Let us first have a look at Table 3, which shows the change and provides useful statistics.

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[22]For a neat description of such principles, see Fei 1939: 31-2.

[23]For instance, see Croll, 1981. Following Bossard (1932) and Stouffer (1940), Croll wrote, "It is generally accepted that there is a demonstrable tendency for it to occur within a bounded locality, with the likelihood of marriage decreasing markedly as the distance between the contracting parties increases" (1981: 85).

[24]For a discussion of the difference between *yuanshang* and *yuanxia*, see Chapter 1, Section 1.6.

Table 3 is arranged along two co-ordinates. The vertical co-ordinate indicates different places, mainly neighbouring villages, from which brides are recruited into Zhaojiahe. The horizontal co-ordinate indicates four different periods, that is, respectively, the period before 1949, from 1950 to 1964, from 1965 to 1979, and 1980 onwards. These periods are arranged according to how they were recognised by the villagers, though the division between the first fifteen years and the second fifteen years of the Maoist era may be slightly arbitrary. The period before 1949 was the pre-communist period, which was often said to be correspondent to the 'traditional' society. The period from 1950 to 1965 was that of collectivisation. The third phase was roughly the period of the Cultural Revolution. The period from 1980 until the time when my fieldwork was conducted in 1991-1992 was the period of the economic reforms. The numbers of brides recorded on the table include only those who were still alive when the survey was carried out.[25]

Villages or places in the table can be divided into two major groups. The first group, consisting of the first eight villages including Qincheng, Yuanjiahe, Poti, Dangjiahe, Liujiahe, Zhaojiahe, Xipo, Beimen, shows the core circle of bride recruitment, which was most commonly talked about in the village when discussing affinal relations. It is among these eight villages that social interaction and economic co-operation were most frequently and intensively carried out. The second group, consisting of the remaining villages and places in the table, is less significant in terms of bride exchange. To Zhao villagers, bride recruitment is not only dependent upon 'propinquity', but also affected by conventions. As we shall see in the following chapter, marriage ties have to be established through friends, relatives or acquaintances as go-betweens. Relatives play an important role in match making, which means that the more daughters Zhao villagers send to another village, the more brides they will have from that village. That is, it is more likely to recruit brides from places to which more daughters are sent. As an old matchmaker once said to me, "Qincheng is a big village and there are a lot of villagers, there are also a lot of Zhao daughters there, so we have a lot of Qincheng wives here!"

Of course, there are contingencies. For instance, those who temporarily go to work in other places, say, a nearby county's mine pit, may bring a wife from that area. During the period before 1949, it was not uncommon for Zhao villagers to marry women who had fled from famines in their home provinces - Henan Province in particular. Another point needs to be made: villages on the table are not the same size, and some may be too small to provide a significant number of brides.

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[25]From the statistical point of view, we should be comfortable in assuming that death is a random factor with regard to the problem of provenance.

Table 3. Locality of Bride Recruitment

	- 1949	1950-1964	1965-1979	1980 -	Total
*Qincheng***	9	13	13	3	38
Yuanjiahe	3	3	13	10	29
Poti	2	4	11	5	22
Dangjiahe	2	2	9	4	17
Liujiahe	2	1	3	10	16
Zhaojiahe	-	-	2	12	14
Xipo**	-	1	3	4	8
Beinen	4	2	1	-	7
Lizhuang	-	1	1	3	5
*Hejiazhuang***	1	2	2	-	5
Miaowa	3	2	-	-	5
Linchuan	1	1	2	-	4
*Wancunxiang***	2	1	1	-	4
*Henan***(p)*	4	-	-	-	4
Leijiawa	-	1	1	1	3
*Yangzhuang**	-	-	1	2	3
Majiahe	-	1	1	-	2
*Jiaoxicun***	1	-	1	-	2
*Guchi***	-	1	-	1	2
Yangjiahe	-	-	1	1	2
*Gansu***(p)*	-	-	-	2	2
*Zhuangdouxiang**	-	-	2	-	2
*Chengqiangdou**	1	-	1	-	2
Linshang	-	-	1	1	2
Potizhuang	-	-	1	-	1
*Sanhecun***	-	-	-	1	1
Baocheng	-	-	1	-	1
Guanjiahe*	-	-	1	-	1
*Liujiawa**	-	1	-	-	1
*Yulin****	1	-	-	-	1
*Loujiawa**	1	-	-	-	1
*Zhaozhuang**	-	-	-	1	1
*Dali****	1	-	-	-	1
*Pucheng****	-	1	-	-	1
*Yaodou**	-	-	-	1	1
*Shangdong***(p)*	-	-	-	1	1
*Dujiadian***	-	-	-	1	1
*Lujingzhen***	1	-	-	-	1
*Zhipao***	-	-	-	1	1

Sources: Household Registration (1990) made by the village accountant and household interviews conducted by myself in 1991-1992.

Notes:
1) Italics: villages which are not in the Dayu Valley.
2) *: villages which do not belong to Leijiawa Xiang (township) but belong to Chengcheng County.
3) **: villages which belong to Heyang County.
4) ***: villages or places which belong to other counties or provinces.
5) (p): province.

In order to understand the significance of choice of villages in bride recruitment, let us focus on the first eight villages. In this group, two villages, Qincheng and Xipo, belong to Heyang County, while the rest all belong to Leijiawa township, Chengcheng County. All these villages are spread along Dayu Valley, three of them - Qincheng, Poti and Beimencun - are *yuanshang* villages. It is evident that the administrative division between the two counties does not intervene in the geographic ellipse of bride recruitment. Up to 1980, for Zhao villagers, their provenance of bride recruitment was roughly shaped in a circle, which means that the difference between *yuanshang* and *yuanxia* was not significant in terms of bride exchange. Qincheng, a *yuanshang* village and with 38 brides on the record, is the most important place of bride recruitment for Zhao villagers so far. However, a decline in the number of brides recruited from Qincheng seems to show that villagers in Qincheng no longer treat Zhaojiahe as an equal partner in 'exchange' of brides. Table 4 shows that the percentage of *yuanshang* brides recruited in recent years significantly decreased. For instance, the brides from Qincheng constituted a dominant large proportion of brides up to the mid 1960s, and then started to decline from about 50% of all the brides recruited to little more than 23% in the period of the Cultural Revolution. The striking fact is that the number of brides recruited from Qincheng is down to 6.25% during the period of the economic reforms. Poti, another *yuanshang* village, experienced an increase in the period of the Cultural Revolution, consisting of one fourth of the whole bride recruitment, but significantly declined in its proportion to 10.42% in the period of the economic reforms. Beimencun, the last *yuanshang* village in this group, has simply supplied no brides since 1980. The total percentage of all three *yuanshang* villages' brides changes from 68.18% (before 1949), through 73.01% (1950-1964) and 45.45% (1965-1979), to 16.67% (after 1980). With the withdrawal of *yuanshang* villages, the provenance of bride recruitment for Zhao villagers became a belt in shape stretching only along the bottom of Dayu Valley.

Table 4. Wife Recruitment from the Eight Major Villages (%)

	- 1949	1950-1964	1965-1979	1980 -	Total
*Qincheng***	9(40.91)	13(50.00)	13(23.64)	3(06.25)	38(25.17)
Yuanjiahe	3(13.64)	3(11.54)	13(23.64)	10(20.83)	29(19.21)
Poti	2(09.09)	4(15.38)	11(20.00)	5(10.42)	22(14.57)
Dangjiahe	2(09.09)	2(07.69)	9(16.36)	4(08.33)	17(11.26)
Liujiahe	2(09.09)	1(03.85)	3(05.45)	10(20.83)	16(10.60)
Zhaojiahe	-	-	2(03.64)	12(25.00)	14(09.27)
Xipo**	-	1(03.85)	3(05.45)	4(08.33)	8(05.30)
Beimen	4(18.18)	2(07.69)	1(01.82)	-	7(04.64)
Σ	22(100.0)	26(100.0)	55(100.0)	48(100.0)	151(100.0)

As a consequence of this change, Zhao villagers started in the late 1970s to look for brides within the village. As shown in Table 4, there was no bride taken from Zhaojiahe before the mid 1960s, and there were only two cases during the period from 1965 to 1979. Both cases happened in the late 1970s. A remarkable change took place in the 1980s: 12 brides, that is, one fourth of the whole number of brides recruited, came from Zhao *zijiawu*. The single surname rule, which used

to prohibit marriage within the village, had to be broken. There were different interpretations of this change. Young people who had left the village bluntly criticised the situation by saying that this would bring about genetic deterioration for the Zhao *zijiawu* and finally destroy the village. Behind this argument is a 'biological' concern which often appears in official claims. Those who lived in the village often intended to use the official discourse differently, especially the elderly who were responsible for managing their children's marriages. Those who supported the idea of recruiting brides within the village often argued that the Marriage Law, both the 1950s and the 1980s version, did not prohibit people of the same surname from marrying each other if they were beyond biological ties of five generations. The idea of *wu-fu* [26] was often applied indifferently with 'five generations'. As Wanyou, whose daughter married within the village in the late 1970s, said, "My daughter was the first one who married within the village, but my daughter's father-in-law and I have long been 'out of five generations' *(chu wu-fu)*. The government says that people should not marry within five generations, but we are not. We are out of five generations."[27] However, few villagers in fact knew clearly the exact positions in which they stood in the genealogy.

Wanyou is a *zijiawu* brother of my first host in Dawa. Both Wanyou's second daughter and his granddaughter were married within the village. Wanyou's daughter, Fenlian, was married to Jianliang of Dongbang (the second group). They were classmates in the high school and got married in 1979. Their marriage was the second case of intra-village marriage. As to the question of why Fenlian was married in Zhaojiahe, Wanyou explained, "After my son's death in 1974, there were not enough people in my family. My wife died a long time ago. There was always a shortage of hands in my family. Therefore, I talked to some go-betweens and told them my difficulties. I asked them to look out for my Fenlian. But my consideration was that I wanted to marry Fenlian nearby. In case that I needed her help, I could reach her. This was the reason that I married Fenlian to Dongbang (the second group)."[28] When talking about the significance of intra-village marriage, Wanyou was very proud of himself: "I made such a good example. Nowadays, there are more intra-village marriages. They all follow my suit. The girls from *yuanshang* do not want to come to our village any more. What can we do? We have to marry our daughters within the village. We can not let our daughters stay home".

Unlike the case of Chen village in Guangdong described by Chan, Madsen and Unger (1984), intra-village marriage did not happen during the radical years of the Maoist revolution in Zhaojiahe.[29] Rather, it occurred with the advent of the economic reforms. In a recent effort to examine the effects of the economic reforms on family and marriage, Harrell suggests that, with respect to village endogamy, members of rural communities in China would be likely to return to their pre-communist practice which was signified by the discouragement or even prohibition of

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[26]For a detailed discussion of the idea of *wu-fu*, see A. Wolf 1972.

[27]See, for instance, Marriage Law of P. R. C., adopted at the Third Session of the Fifth National People's Congress, September, 1980. Article 6 says, "Marriage is not permitted in any of the following circumstances. a) Where the man and woman are lineal relatives by blood or collateral relatives by blood (up to the third degree of relationship)".

[28]I shall discuss the way Zhao villagers talk about marriage in the following chapter in detail.

[29]In Harrell's observation of three south-western villages in mainland China, intra-village marriages were popular even before the collective period in Renhe, Yishala and Zhuangshang, see his 1992: 332.

marriages within the village (1992: 323-4). This assumption is not applicable to the case of Zhaojiahe. On the contrary, Zhao villagers practised village exogamy in both the pre-communist and the Maoist period, but village endogamy took place during the period of the economic reforms. What are the underlying elements that give rise to this change?

I would like to point out that this change in marriage practice reflects a shift in the conceptualisation of kin groups of Zhao villagers. On the matter of mate choices, the guiding principle is not longer organised around the notion of *zijiawu* but organised around the notion of *yao*. We cannot say that this is a direct consequence of the household production, but what we can say is that there are several parallel changes that are taking place in Zhaojiahe. One of these changes is that the organising principle of kinship has shifted from *zijiawu* to *yao*. In other words, among other changes, one aspect of the *wu* institution replaces another to be recognised as the exchange basis for marriage. In terms of bride exchange, the notion of *zijiawu* is losing its power. This suggests a re-ordering of familial institutions: a domestic model of kinship replaces the descent model. The most important characteristic of this change is that women are allowed much more power and space than before.

There are three reasons for Zhao women to be considered more powerful than before.[30] Firstly, women, trained as members of the people's communes in the Maoist past, participate in agricultural production. There are few things that women cannot do today. But, on the other hand, few men can replace women for their roles as wives who manage the family, although women may insist that one has to have a son, otherwise life will be extremely difficult. The system of household production requires both men and women's participation. Secondly, it is increasingly difficult for Zhao villagers to find brides for their sons in recent years. There are many reasons for this situation. Zhao villagers see themselves as being located in a disadvantaged geographic location which is outside the main stream of economic development. They believe that there are few girls who would like to marry into Zhaojiahe. This difficulty in bride recruitment has given young wives a great deal of strength in bargaining with their mother-in-laws. In general, the husband tends to support his wife rather than his mother if there is a conflict between the two. Thirdly, for most Zhao villagers, the networks built through marriage are the main sources of economic co-operation and political alliance. There is a clear tendency for Zhao villagers to strengthen affinal ties by increasing the scales of wedding and death celebrations which unite *zijiawu* and relatives.

I argue that this shift in marriage practice is one of a series of changes taking place in the village, which indicate a re-ordering of the fields of social relations. During the Maoist era, despite its dramatic social changes, the organising basis of kin relations remained at the village level. It is only in the past decade that the organising basis of kinship has shifted to individual households. The household has emerged as a dominant institution in making marriage choices. However, this does not mean that this shift is simply a result of the economic reforms. As I argue, this change, shifting from a descent model to a domestic model, has its roots in the Maoist

[30]For a discussion of women's status in the traditional Chinese society, see, for instance, Ahern (1975), Cohen (1976), R. Watson (1984), J. Watson (1982), A. Wolf (1975). The general picture is that women were outside of the formal structure of descent groups and that they had little voice on controlling property and resources apart from some informal influences.

revolution. The conditions of the economic reforms not only produce but also are produced by such shifts in kinship practices.

Discussion

In this chapter, I have argued that there is a practical relation between kin terms and their actual socio-economic functions, and representations of kinship and kinship in practice are mutually constitutive. The studies of Chinese kinship, either undertaken by western scholars or Chinese, often fail to account for such a process in which articulations of kinship are embodied in kinship practices. Therefore, in this chapter, I have focused more closely on what are the practical relations and functions of kin terms in everyday life in Zhaojiahe, and shown that kin terms, as an understanding of the structure of social relations, are embodied in everyday practice. In order to understand social relations or the structure of these relations as defined and described by way of kinship, we need to examine how kin relations are constituted in everyday practices.

The case of Zhaojiahe provides a good example for us to see how the representation of kinship is practically related to the formation of kin relations. Zhao villagers have developed four basic kin terms which all have their roots in their housing arrangements. To Zhao villagers, kin relations can only be discussed in terms of houses, rooms, or courtyards. Earlier, scholars have pointed out that there are different institutions within the Chinese family (Wolf and Huang 1980).[31] My materials suggest that an inspection of different aspects of housing arrangements may shed lights on an understanding of these different institutions within the family. In other words, in order to understand the possible changes and adjustments between these different institutions within the family, we should turn our attention to the changing strategies and tactics of everyday practices in arrangements of houses, rooms and courtyards. In so doing, we may see how the conditions of the economic reforms are produced at the level of everyday practice.

In recent years, Zhao villagers started to practise intra-village marriage, which, in my view, indicates a shift in their way of re-ordering the organising basis of kinship. I have argued that, for the first time in the history of Zhaojiahe, a descent model of kinship is replaced by a domestic model of kinship, and this shift explains why intra-village marriage becomes an acceptable practice. It is naive to see this shift as a direct result of the economic reforms, that is, as a direct result of the household production. Not only is this shift rooted in a history much longer than the past decade of reforms, but this shift is also a reaction to the specific condition of Zhaojiahe as a village. In other words, this change indicates a specific strategy rather than a general tendency. We should not assume that a similar tendency would occur in all other parts of China. But we would see, by looking at changing strategies and tactics in everyday practices, that there is a general transformation taking place in rural China. In reaction to this change, Zhao villagers have been trying to re-organise their spatial-temporal strategies of kinship practice. Intra-village marriage in Zhaojiahe is such a reaction to call for spatial expansion. Under

[31]From the perspective of 'family management', Cohen claimed that, though there were dramatic changes in mainland China in the past forty years, family as a practical institution in terms of management has changed little and demonstrated a great degree of adaptability, 1992.

increasingly difficult conditions of expanding the network of social relations into other areas, Zhao villagers create more room for economic co-operation within the village by allowing their daughters to get married with their *zijiawu* brothers.

Marriage becomes a central concern of everyday life. How can it be arranged? Who is in charge of whose marriage? What are the strategies in negotiation of a marriage? These are questions that I shall turn to now.

Chapter 3 Marriage in Practice

Introduction

For Zhao villagers, marriage became a serious problem in the past decade. Zhao villagers explicitly and recurrently expressed their fear of not being able to find brides for their sons and some referred to this increasing difficulty in the 1980s as a marriage crisis *(wei-ji).* As I have shown earlier, Zhao villagers have largely maintained their village *(zijiawu)* exogamy so far but, since the 1980s, that is, after the economic reforms began, there is an increasing tendency towards the practice of village endogamy. Intravillage marriage became more and more popular in Zhaojiahe in the last fifteen years, and different interpretations have been given with regard to the change in mate choices. Zhao villagers do not question the notion of marriage itself but they do make extensive comments on how a marriage goes through a long process of negotiation and settlement. In this chapter I shall focus my investigation on how Zhao villagers make marriage ties as and in practice.

I have argued in the previous chapter that, as a response to the wider socio-economic changes, Zhao villagers have been re-organising their fields of social relations, among them kinship is still one of the most important. I also pointed out that, in Zhaojiahe, a domestic (or affinal) model of kinship has replaced (or is replacing) a descent model of kinship. In order to expand social space, intra-village marriage took place in the past decades. In this re-organisation of the fields of social relations, Zhao villagers have paid great attention to how marriage negotiations should be carried out. This is the reason that we must make a careful examination of the process of marriage in the village.

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In a fairly recent attempt to examine the effects of China's post-1978 reforms on rural marriage practice, Harrell claimed that, since the reforms could be seen as having a double effect, changes in marriage practices in rural China should be expected to follow different paths (Harrell 1992).[1] For instance, some changes may result in engagement in practices long-forbidden or strongly discouraged by the communist government during the Maoist era, such as early marriage and high bride price or dowry, since people were allowed greater freedom in making these choices during the past fifteen years. On the other hand, as Harrell wrote, "Other changes, however, might result from the opening up of economic opportunities that were never there before, either before or during the collectivist era" (1992: 323). His point is that changes would not occur in one direction. Underlying this analysis, there are two frameworks of historical reference. The first is built upon the recent history of mainland China. That is to look at the changes of marriage practice in rural China, in terms of the process of collectivisation and decollectivisation in modes of production, by the approach of comparing the Maoist policies with the policies made during the period of the economic reforms. In other words, changes in marriage practice are seen

[1] See also Davis and Harrell 1993.

as the consequences of variations of government policies. The second is constructed upon a comparative framework in which the Chinese case is examined in terms of the history of development. That is to examine how marriage practice reacts to 'the opening up of economic opportunities' which have never existed in China before - either during the pre-communist period or the Maoist era - but were common to other developing countries. For instance, what was the effect of the development of rural industries on marriage practice?

Anthropologists working on China are by no means unfamiliar with these frameworks, though so far more attention has been often paid to how the communist policies made impacts on marriage practice rather than taking the Chinese case into comparison with experiences of other developing countries. For instance, in both C. K. Yang and Croll's efforts to examine the issue of marriage in China during the Maoist era, their attention focused upon how marriage practice changed when the wider social milieu altered. From this point of view, the examination of the government's position became extremely important. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that both of these scholars started their research by looking at the Marriage Law of 1950, one of the few laws immediately installed by the communist government after it gained power, and its consequences.[2] On the other hand, the comparative framework of development is often implicit, since, among other reasons, many see the Maoist communist movement as a unique complex of practices which could hardly be compared directly with the general trend of development.[3]

Following these frameworks, Harrell suggested that several hypotheses should be expected to follow during the period of the economic reforms.[4] His first hypothesis concerns age at marriage. For two reasons, Harrell claimed that age at marriage in rural China would in general fall. The first reason is that the government abandoned the effort to induce people to get married late,[5] and the second reason is that the decollectivisation of production and property relations in rural China reduced the ability of the government to monitor compliance with its policies of encouraging late marriage. This suggests, according to Harrell, a return to the pre-communist practice.[6]

Harrell's second hypothesis concerns village endogamy. Village endogamy, which was traditionally discouraged or prohibited in many places, particularly in lineage villages, emerged in some regions as a strategy of mate choice during the collective period. For instance, Chen villagers, a lineage village in Guangdong, made their marriage revolution by introducing intra-village marriage during the period of the Cultural Revolution.[7] Although there were countervailing tendencies (for instance, the introduction of free courtship might result in village endogamy), Harrell maintained that, with respect to village endogamy, the general trend might

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[2]See C. K. Yang 1959, esp. 31-44; Croll 1981: 1-8.

[3]In the case of its population policies, see for instance Banister 1984: 1-9.

[4]For Harrell's discussion of his hypotheses, see particularly his 1992: 323-5.

[5]The Marriage Law of 1980 establishes a legal marriage age of 22 for men and 20 for women, which runs counter to the earlier practice in the late 1970s when the communist government was inducing people to get married in their mid or even late twenties. For a brief discussion of the Maoist practice on late marriage in the late 1970s, see Banister 1987: 152-60; Croll 1981: 60-2.

[6]Greenhalgh's study of three suburban Shaanxi villages and Selden's research in a Hebei village seem to support this hypothesis. See Greenhalgh 1993; Selden 1993.

[7]See Chan, Madsen and Unger 1984: 188-191. For a similar suggestion, see also Potter and Potter 1990: 200-205. For a recent overall examination of 'familial strategies' in north China villages, see Selden 1993.

tend to return to the pre-communist practice, that is, the discouragement or prohibition of intra-village marriage.

The third hypothesis Harrell made is about uxorilocal marriage. Uxorilocal marriage was encouraged by the state during the most radical years of the Maoist revolution.[8] Harrell predicted that it would decline in those areas where it was not traditionally a favoured practice on the one hand and, on the other, would continue at the same level as before in places where it had formerly been favoured.

Finally, Harrell claimed that, as the government's 'anti-feudal' policies weakened, bride price and dowry would increase. Particularly, dowry would be increasing rapidly. "In particular, in areas where dowry declined with the elimination of competition for status based on property in the collective era, it will increase faster than bride-price. At the same time, the predicted direction of modern change would also be in the direction of higher bride-price and dowry, for the simple reason that families now have more surplus wealth than ever to invest in signs of social status" (Harrell 1992: 325). A underlying assumption in Harrell's prediction is related to Goody's argument that it is dowry rather than bride-price that builds and sustains social stratification.[9]

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For decades, anthropologists have been casting doubts on and challenging the validity of prevailing principles and modes of classification of kinship and marriage. Needham, for instance, making use of Wittgenstein's later philosophy, (which incidentally was frowned at by Russell as a lazy man's tiredness with serious thinking), argued: "To put it bluntly, then, there is no such thing as kinship and it follows that there can be no such thing as kinship theory" (1971: 5). What Needham rejected were the anthropological conceptual premises about kinship and marriage, which Wittgenstein would call "a craving for generality". By calling anthropologists to pay attention - paralleling Wittgenstein's claim that philosophy should examine 'uses' of language in particular contexts, that is, 'language games' - to different uses of kinship and marriage terms in different societies, Needham maintained that "there was no single word which would be taken to stand for 'marriage'", and, as a useful word, "it has all the resources of meaning which its long history has conferred upon it, and we should now find it hard to communicate without these" (1971: 7). The relevance of bringing Needham into our discussion is that the anthropological critique of kinship and marriage helps us be aware of the necessity of starting our investigation with categories used, in my case, by Zhao villagers. How do Zhao villagers talk about marriage? What do they do with regard to bride-price and dowry, so to speak? Under what circumstances do Zhao villagers refer to one's age in respect to marriage?

In this chapter, I shall start by looking at who talks about whose marriage and how in the village. Marriage issues are distinctively talked about by the parental generation who employ specific vocabularies in a stylistic way. An examination of a pair of expressions employed by the parental generation suggests that marriage involves a division of responsibility among family

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[8]See, for instance, M. Wolf 1985: 196-8. See also Pasternak 'On the causes and consequences of uxorilocal marriage', 1985a.

[9]See Goody, 1972. For a brief discussion of Goody's idea with reference to Guangdong villages, see Parish and Whyte, 1978: 180-92.

members. I shall then turn to examine the marriage process in the village, which is clearly defined by four stages. I want to stress the point that, in Zhaojiahe, marriage is not viewed as a 'relationship' but rather as a process. When Zhao villagers comment on either their own or other's marriages, they will focus on the details of each stage carried out through the whole process of marriage. Following the discussion of four stages of the marriage process, this chapter turns to examine the marriage finance and the way in which it is articulated. My materials confirms the view that there is a rapid increase in both bride-price and dowry but there is no evidence to show that dowry increases faster than bride-price. In Zhaojiahe, a marriage has to be negotiated through help of the matchmaker. An examination of the role of the matchmaker helps us understand the way in which a marriage is negotiated. The social significance of marriage for individuals, which points to the matters such as age at marriage, being single, remarrying and getting divorced, will be examined through ethnographic case studies towards the end of the chapter.

3.1 Who Is Talking about Whose Marriage?

Who talks about marriage and how? Whose marriage issues do they often talk about? Marriage is a popular topic but the ways in which it is talked about by different groups of villagers are different. With respect to the way in which marriage is discussed, there is a clear contrast between the unmarried young villagers and their parents. Unmarried young people in Zhaojiahe hardly talk about their own marriage issues; instead they talk about the marriage issues of other villagers of other households. In other words, young people in Zhaojiahe comment on others' marriages, but they do not discuss their own marriage issues. With respect to the style of their comments, although there are variations in individual choices of words and phrases, it is very common to joke about and laugh at other's mate choices or ceremonial arrangements. But, when unmarried young people were asked about their own marriage issues, they would immediately become silent. That is, they are not supposed to talk about their own marriage issues. Young people's marriages are supposed to be talked about and discussed by their parents. When Zhao parents talk about their own children's marriage issues, they will not laugh at, or make jokes about, what they are talking about. When talking about their children's marriage, Zhao parents are serious, careful, accurate, attentive.

There are two key phrases that Zhao parents employ when discussing their children's marriage: *song-xi-fu* and *mai-nu-zi*. Both phrases, which are constituted grammatically in the same way, consist of three Chinese characters. The term *xi-fu*, which consists of two characters, is 'wife'; while *nu-zi*, which also consists of two characters, indicates the daughter though it should literally be translated as 'girl'. *Song* and *mai* are two verbs. To *song* is to 'send', while to *mai* is to 'sell'. Therefore, to put them together, that is, 'to send a wife (to the son)' and 'to sell a daughter (to someone else)'. In Zhaojiahe, when parents discuss their children's marriages, these two phrases are inevitable. For instance, when talking about the marriage of one's son, one would say, "My son is old enough (to be married), so I have to think about 'sending him a wife'." Or, "Look at that horrible family, their son is already twenty five, they still cannot 'send the son a wife'.

What a shame!" Or, "Nowadays, everyone is thinking about 'sending a wife' to his son early, we cannot afford to be late." When talking about marriage of a daughter, Zhao parents would say, "It is no problem to 'sell a daughter' nowadays, and many families want to 'sell their daughters' to the *yuanshang* areas." Or, "Look at that family, how clever they are! They 'sold their daughter' to another *wu* and got twice as much as they had been promised previously by Shanghe's parents". Or, as Wanyou, an old villager in his sixties, once told me, "Because I wanted to be close to my daughter, I told the go-between that I wanted to 'sell her' nearby".

However, it is by no means surprising to find that, with regard to the vocabularies of marriage applied in the Chinese communities, different sets of verbs in relation to different sexes are employed. For instance, in the case of mandarin, *jia*[10] is used to refer to the marriage of a woman, while *qu* is employed to describe the marriage of a man. Both terms not only mean 'to marry' but also imply the fact of virilocal marriage. *Jia* is to 'marry away from one's own natal family', that is, to 'marry into the family of one's husband'. In contrast, *qu* implies that the male will receive the bride through marriage. However, this difference does not exclude uses of these expressions by both parties involved. For example, in mandarin a woman can say: *Wo yao jia ren le* ("I am going to get married"), and a man can also say that he will *qu* a wife. The point is that this division is only based upon gender but not upon generation. But, in the case of Zhaojiahe, two phrases of *song-xi-fu* and *mai-nu-zi* are restricted to use by parents, since 'to send' a wife to oneself or 'to sell' oneself to another is both grammatically and socially inadequate. This seems to suggest that, by applying these two verbs, *song* and *mai*, Zhao parents exclude their children in discussion of their own marriage issues. The uses of these two phrases, as I intend to argue, indicate clearly who is in charge of a family's marriage issues. It is parents - rather than parties involved - who are responsible for arrangements and negotiations of their children's marriage. It is clear that marriage is not simply a matter which concerns only individuals. It is rather a matter which concerns the family, the other members of a family, parents in particular.

Indeed, there is an alternative way for Zhao parents to discuss their children's marriage. Those, who used to be village cadres or other kinds of 'activists' *('ji-ji-fen-zi')* during the radical years of the Maoist revolution, sometimes talked about their children's marriage in terms of *ren-wu* (literally, 'task'). *Ren-wu* used to be an extremely popular term, which could be used for various occasions, during the Maoist era. Anything assigned by the leaders of the brigades or production terms, either political or economic in nature, such as to organise a mass meeting or to cultivate a piece of land, used to be called a *ren-wu*. To be given a *renwu* used to be thought of as a honour, which indicated the trust from the party or the collective. For example, Wanbin, my host in Dawa, who used to be a village cadre, said to me several times: "To have your children get married is a primary and most important 'task' *('zhong-yao-ren-wu')*. To fulfil this 'task' is the responsibility of parents". Although, in terms of a 'task', it is still the parents who are talking about their children's marriage, the difference is that, by employing terms such as 'task', Zhao villagers do not any longer differentiate marriage issues between the son and the daughter. Both

[10]Jia, the fourth tone, is 'to marry", which is different from *jia*, the first tone, often translated as 'family'.

sexes are more or less equally discussed by those who would talk about their children's marriage in terms of 'tasks'.

There are implications. Talking about their children's marriage in terms of 'tasks' seems to suggest that the communist campaigns, during the Maoist era, for more equality between men and women, did bring about some effects in Zhao villagers' life. With regard to the sphere of marriage, a stronger consciousness of class or political status may have reduced the consciousness of physical difference between the two sexes (cf. C. K. Yang 1956; Croll 1981). With the advent of the economic reforms and the re-distribution of division of labour within the household, a greater awareness of different sexes, as I intend to argue, has been re-worked by Zhao villagers in the past decade. In a crude sense, one can argue that the traditional definition of gender has re-emerged in Zhaojiahe. However, apart from a few, most Zhao parents talk about their children's marriage in terms of 'to send' and 'to sell'. It is worth noting that both *song-xi-fu* ('to send a wife') and *mai-nu-zi* ('to sell a daughter') make explicit uses of female roles in discussion of both cases. Either 'husband' or 'son' is not explicit in the usage. This suggests that, to Zhao villagers, it is women who move around - a thesis which complies with Lévi-Strauss's idea of women as one of three exchange flows among groups of men in his structural analysis of kinship. In order to understand the significance of the 'exchange of women' in Zhaojiahe, we need to examine closely the uses of the two verbs - 'to send' and 'to sell'.

In Zhaojiahe, both the verb *song* and *mai* are also employed on other social occasions. The most popular social usage of the term *song* concerns the way in which visits of relatives are talked about. For instance, when a mother wants to visit her married daughter, instead of saying that she would like to 'visit'[11] her daughter, she would say *'Gai gei nu song dian mo qu'* ("We ought to 'send' some steamed bread to our daughter"). Steamed bread, which is the dominant type of food, is called *mo* in the local dialect. On different social occasions, different types of *mo* are supposed to be exchanged among relatives. Relationships are therefore reiterated by way of exchange of steamed bread. To talk about visiting relatives is often accomplished in terms of 'sending' steamed bread to them. Although uses of the term *song* ('to send') always involve a sense of reciprocity, exchange of steamed bread does not have to be direct and immediate.[12]

Two points need to be made here. First, those, who talk about sending steamed bread to relatives, are those who talk about their children's marriage issues. Those who talk about sending steamed bread to relatives are also those who control economic operations and resources in the family. They are often middle-aged parents. Second, to use the term 'to send' on other social occasions implies a sense of reciprocity, either immediate or postponed. This may suggest that the use of the term 'to send' in the situation of marriage also assumes a reciprocal relationship between two generations. That is, the parents 'send' brides to their sons as the fulfilment of a 'task' and, in return, the sons assume the responsibility of supporting their parents and continue the family. There involves a reciprocity of responsibility, a dialogue between two generations.

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[11]It is quite common, for instance, in Beijing to say that *wo qu kan kan nu er* ("I am going to visit my daughter").

[12]I shall discuss the significance of food - steamed bread in particular - in signifying and reiterating social relationships in the following chapter.

Turning to the term *mai*, we need to be reminded that there are two types of transaction in the village.[13] For everyday needs such as cooking oil, sugar, and so forth, transaction is often done within the village through travelling traders who carry their goods on either bicycles or donkey carts. The term *huan*, that is 'to exchange', is used for this kind of 'buying' or 'selling'. Zhao villagers do not use either the term *mai* (the third tone), that is 'to buy', or *mai* (the fourth tone), that is 'to sell',[14] to describe or to engage in this kind of transaction. The other kind of transaction is concerned with markets usually outside the village. When going to markets, Zhao villagers employ terms such as 'buying' and 'selling' instead of 'exchanging'. Underlying this difference in application of different terms for different kinds of transaction, there is a division between 'in-village' and 'out-village'. This does not so much concern the actual behaviour of transaction as it concerns the boundary defined between 'self' and 'other' by Zhao villagers. To go beyond their own village, Zhao villagers would use the term 'to sell', while within their own village, the same kind of transactional activity is called to 'exchange'. That is, in a social sense, 'to sell' indicates an exchange beyond one's own village. Therefore, 'to sell a daughter' may simply indicate the fact of village exogamy.

Anthropologists have long argued that not only what people say but also how they say it should be carefully examined (e.g. Bloch 1975a; Parkin 1975). What is it revealed by an examination of how Zhao villagers talk about marriage? Some observations can be made through the above examination. In the early 1990s in Zhaojiahe, marriage is still a family matter. Zhao parents seem to control their children's marriage. Young generations have no legitimised vocabulary to discuss their own marriage, let alone courtship among the youth. Women are still moved around, or even talked as if they are assets of their parents. It is rather like either 'revolution postponed' (Wolf 1975) or 'revolution thrown away'. What effects did the Maoist revolution bring into the village? How do Zhao villagers re-work their conventional ideologies to situate themselves in a fast changing environment in the past ten years? What kind of strategies do they have to employ in order to compete? These questions need to be answered with a detailed inspection of different aspects of marriage in the village.

3.2 The Process of Marriage

Zhao villagers do not talk about marriage as if it is a relationship between two parties but discuss it as a process that two families involved have to go through. According to Zhao villagers, there should be four clear stages to be carried out with regard to a process of marriage, of which Zhao villagers, either young or old, are all conscious. These four stages are said to be *tan-hua* (literally, 'to have a talk'), *kan-wu* (literally, 'to look at the *wu*'), *ding-hun* ('to get engaged') and *guo-shi* ('to have the wedding'). Each of the four phrases consists of two Chinese characters. In all four phrases, the first character is a verb and the second a noun. When talking about marriage, Zhao villagers are talking about these different stages which are viewed by them as a dynamic

[13] A full discussion of the market behaviour in Zhaojiahe has been given in Chapter 1.
[14] *Mai* ('to buy') and *mai* ('to sell') are spelled in the same way but written in completely different characters. The sound difference can only be detected from their different tones.

process. Zhao villagers hardly talk about attributes or status of concerned individuals; rather, they talk about how these stages are carried out in different cases. They talk about issues such as whether one's son is already involved in a *tan-hua* or how one's engagement banquet is arranged. They not only talk about whether a particular individual is married or not but also, more often and more enthusiastically, talk about how a particular person gets married, how he or she manages the process of marriage. It is the detailed arrangements and development of the marriage process which excites Zhao villagers. A few days after I arrived in the village, once when I asked Yin'ai, the wife of my host in Dawa, about weddings, she said to me: "*Guoshi* ('to have a wedding') is the very last thing that you have to consider. Every person has to go through four steps *(jin guo zhe xie shi)*. The first is *tan-hua*, and without *tan-hua* no one can go further. And then *kanwu*, if they do not like your *yuanzi* (i.e. the courtyard), you will have no way to go further either. *Dinghun* is also important. The last thing is the wedding. Every step is important and must be very carefully carried out".

i) *Tanhua* ('to have a talk')

After an initial agreement between two families is reached, the first step is to arrange - with the help of a matchmaker - for the young candidate couple to meet, which is called *tanhua*. It is always parents who initiate the negotiation of marriage for their sons or daughters. During the stage of *tanhua*, the candidate couple are supposed to meet each other for the first time. Because the locality of marriage choices is restricted to a few neighbouring villages, the candidate couple might have already seen each other before *tanhua*, although in most cases they do not have a chance to talk to each other before. *Tanhua* often takes place in a third person's house, a relative's or a friend's, for instance. The candidate couple will meet and talk to each other for a couple of hours, though, in most cases, they are not left entirely alone.

The stage of *tanhua* was said to be created in the late 1950s, according to Zhao villagers. As in many other parts of rural China, in Zhaojiahe, the bride and the bridegroom were not supposed to meet each other before their wedding during the pre-communist period. As an old villager once said to me, "Nowadays, there are so many changes. I had not seen my wife's face until I had the wedding. There was no way for a bridegroom to see his bride before the wedding when I was young. Everything was arranged by your parents. Nowadays things are changed. Young people may *tanhua*. This is completely different. During the period of people's communes, *tanhua* was already popular". This change that allows the parties involved to meet shows the effects of the establishment of the Marriage Law of 1950 and the political enforcement by the communist government in the 1950s to weaken the rural patriarchal authority which was rooted in patrilineality.

Tanhua is not a term of the local dialect but a mandarin term adopted from the official language. During the Maoist era, as Zhao villagers recalled, the term was very popular for various uses in the village. For instance, during the period of people's communes, when a party or a village authority expected to talk to other villagers, they would employ the term *tanhua*. Whenever there was a mass meeting in the village, the village cadres had to 'talk' *(tanhua)* with enthusiastic activists and poor peasants in the first place. This usage was then borrowed to

describe the first stage of the marriage process. On other occasions, when Zhao villagers get together to have a chat, they will say 'let us *pianhan*' (literally, 'let us have a chat') instead of 'let us *tanhua*' (literally, 'let us talk'). Both mean to get together to have a word, but *pianhan* ('to chat') is a local term, while *tanhua* ('to talk') is adopted from the official language.

What do the candidate couple talk about during the stage of *tanhua*? Young people, those who were married not long ago, inclined to reply casually. Some said that they talked about everything when they met but refused to tell what this 'everything' was. Others told me that there was nothing to be talked about when they sat together for a couple of hours. For instance, when Zunxia, a young wife from Dangjiahe, told of her experience during *tanhua*, she said, "There was nothing to say. I did not care. It was my parents who asked me to go, so I went. I did not have anything to say. We just sat there. We knew each other though we had not talked to each other before". The view that there was nothing substantial to be talked about during the stage of *tanhua* was furiously refuted by the elder villagers. For instance, once an old villager from Nanjian who had two sons and three grandsons, said, "*Tanhua* is important, since the bride price negotiated through a matchmaker has to be confirmed. You have to make it clear whether it is right. This is a thing one cannot afford to be unclear about. Otherwise, you will have troubles. How can you say that there is nothing to be talked about during *tanhua*?"

Although, theoretically, both sides could terminate the marriage process at any stage, no report suggested that the process was actually halted at the stage of *tanhua* for the reason that the candidate couple did not like each other. This may in turn suggest that *tanhua* is not a stage to consult the couple involved but rather a stage which aims to demonstrate the mutual agreement of the couple. Some parents reported that, before *tanhua*, they had already consulted their son or daughter about the potential match they were going to make for him or her. It may be worth pointing out that young people in the village have hardly any sexual experience of any kind before marriage. Boys and girls study and play together at school but, when they grow up, they seldom talk to each other. Those of opposite sexes who talk to each other in the village are always couples.

ii) *Kanwu* ('to look at the *wu*')

After the candidate couple say 'yes' to each other, the second stage, *kanwu* (literally, 'to look at the *wu*'), will be arranged. Two points need to be made clear here. Firstly, this stage involves only a visit paid by the bride's side to the bridegroom's family. It is not a reciprocal observation. Zhao villagers explained this by saying that, because it was the bride who had to move to live with the groom's family, she therefore needed to 'look at the bridegroom's *wu* before the wedding. Secondly, the term *wu* in this usage refers to *yuanzi*, that is, the courtyard, an image which is associated with inheritance and property relations. As Wanyou, an elderly person, once said to me, "To look at your *yuanzi* is to look at your family status. As soon as one gets into the other's *yuanzi*, one will immediately sense how well off this *wu* is". When referring to marriage issues, it is evident that Zhao villagers talk about a family's qualities and status rather than personal qualities. In other words, to Zhao villagers, it is not the person but rather the economic conditions of a family that needs to be looked at.

Soon after *tanhua*, the two sides - by the arrangement of a matchmaker - will choose a day for *kanwu*. The candidate bride and her parents will go to visit the bridegroom's family on the chosen day. However, not only the bride and her parents but also an 'army' of all important relatives from the girl's side will join this trip. This usually includes bride's sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles and grandparents. Except for an emphasis on the presence of the bride's mother's brothers, there is no rule either to include or exclude any particular branch of relatives. Since this stage is taken as a first formal contact between two sides, any significant relative of the girl's side will be angry if he or she is left uninformed. It will be thought of as an insult.

According to Zhao villagers, there are two requirements for the stage of *kanwu*. The first is that the bridegroom's side has to hand over one third of the 'bride price', which is called *li* in Zhaojiahe, previously agreed by the two sides. When I was in the village, the 'bride price' was usually negotiated in two kinds of *li*, that is, clothing for the bride and money in cash which was usually given to the bride's family. As Yusheng, a villager from Houdi, recalled, when his son was involved in the stage of *kanwu* in 1989, he prepared seven pieces of clothes for the bride, which had been presented on the main table before the guests arrived. The quantity and quality of these clothes were negotiated through a matchmaker and previously agreed by the two sides. An amount of money - one third of the total amount agreed - needs to be wrapped in red paper and given by the bridegroom's mother to the candidate bride. The second requirement is to provide a formal meal for the guests of the girl's side. This meal cannot be compared with either the engagement or the wedding banquet, but it is still necessary. Proper chefs have to be invited to make the meal and a significant amount of money has to be spent on it. However, it is not necessary to invite *zijiawu* or relatives from the bridegroom's side to join the meal.

Several cases were said to fail to continue their marriage processes since the girl's side was not satisfied with the bridegroom's family, either dissatisfied with the family's economic condition or disappointed by the way that the bride groom's family entertained the guests. Blame was often on the matchmaker because it was he or she who had failed to supply proper information.

iii) *Dinghun* ('to get engaged')

At this stage, an engagement banquet is supposed to be held to entertain guests of both sides. The bridegroom's main *zijiawu* need to be invited for the *dinghun* banquet, sometimes even including close friends and neighbours. Guests from the bride's side, which may include even close friends, will expand in number. Another one third of the previously agreed 'bride-price' has to be handed over to the girl's side. The significance of *dinghun* is that it announces the marriage process to one's *zijiawu*. However, no matter how close they are, a *zijiawu* has no right to intervene in the choice of bride by individual families.

After *dinghun*, two families are engaged in a formal relation in which regular visits have to be made on every significant social occasion. These occasions include local holidays, festivals and village market days *(hui)*. Except for other gifts, various kinds of steamed bread have to be exchanged between the two sides on different social occasions. These visits are not symmetrical and the candidate bridegroom and his parents - father in particular - have to visit the candidate

bride frequently. At every visit they have to bring at least one piece of clothing. The candidate bride also makes a trip from time to time to visit the groom's family. However, during this period, the girl's parents stop going to see their future son-in-law's family. This is also the time that the young couple are able to be together but, for most of the time, they are not alone. Even so, some old villagers complained about these visits because young people sometimes had sex. This is by no means a prevalent phenomenon in Zhaojiahe. As a matter of fact, there was only one publicly known case in Dawa in recent years, in which a girl got pregnant. When asked why young people should not be allowed to have sex before marriage, the reply was often that it would make the negotiation of marriage more complicated. For instance, Tiancai, a parent of two teenage sons, once said, "If the girl sleeps with the boy, her *wu* will have no way to retaliate when the boy's *wu* does not keep the promise on the 'bride price'. You sleep with them, you belong to them".

iv) *Guoshi* ('to have the wedding')

Before the wedding day, usually a couple of weeks before the ceremony, the bridegroom and his parents have to accompany the bride and her parents to go to the county town for a shopping trip to purchase, mainly, new clothes for the bride. A small group of relatives from the girl's side will sometimes go with them. This shopping trip became necessary in the 1980s. An agreement about the quality and quantity of clothing has to be roughly made through the matchmaker in advance. However, this does not mean that the bride will always hold on to the agreement. One of the major complaints, which was often given by the matchmakers, was that the bride often asked too much and the bridegroom's side could not afford it. Disputes over the last large piece of spending before the wedding often put a process of marriage in danger. Toward the end of the shopping day, the bride and her companions have to be offered a meal in the town, which often depletes the financial pool of the groom's side.

Before the wedding, the last one third of the 'bride-price' has to be passed to the bride's family. In most cases, the wedding takes place in the bridegroom's courtyard in which a temporary dinning hall will be installed, with usually ten to twelve huge square tables arranged inside. Each table can be used to entertain seven or eight people at one time. Guests come and eat in turn. The whole wedding is in fact a feast which lasts often a whole day from the early morning till the late night. After the wedding the bride stays with her husband for the first night in their new room. The following day the bridegroom has to invite his wife's family to come to eat again. The third day the bride will go back to pay a visit to her own parents, and then needs to be picked up by her husband the following day. The marriage process is then completed.

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With respect to the marriage process, several points need to be made here. First, although there were variations from one household to another, the marriage process lasted usually several years, according to Zhao villagers. For instance, in the case of Wanbin's second son and his wife, Xincang and Zunxia, - a young couple in their late twenties living in Dawa, they spent more than five years from *tanhua* to their wedding. When it was arranged for Zunxia to 'talk' to her candidate husband in the mid 1980s, she was less than sixteen. However, according to Zunxia,

her case was not extraordinary. Partly due to the increasing difficulty in recruitment of brides, Zhao villagers tended to begin marriage negotiations for their sons early rather than late in recent years.

Second, if a marriage negotiation is broken by the girl's side, the girl's side will have to return the 'bride-price' she has received to the boy's family. For instance, Wangcai, a demobilised soldier in Nanjian, was married to the school mistress, Wang, who came from Poti. When they started their marriage process, Wang was studying at a teacher's school and Wangcai was in the army. Wang's parents were expecting that Wangcai would either remain in the cities or become a cadre after his service in the army. Wangcai did find a job at the local government and worked there for two years after he had completed his service in the army, but finally he had to return to the village. After Wangcai had returned to the village, Wang's parents started to doubt whether their daughter should marry Wangcai, since Wang became a school teacher after her graduation. As Wangcai said, "A teacher can't match a peasant! That is for sure. But Wang likes me. It was her parents who wanted her to marry someone else. But they had already accepted all the things from my family. If they wanted to terminate this relation, they would have to return everything they received from my family. Her family was too poor to pay back what they had taken. Therefore, they could not break the process. So we married but I still did not talk to my parents-in-law. They are snobbish". Wangcai's story was confirmed by his friends but, from a slightly different angle. Other villagers seemed to stress the fact that to break a process was both a disgrace and an economic loss. On the other hand, if the marriage process is broken by the boy's side, there will not be any compensation for the boy's family, no matter how much they have already paid out. However, I did not hear a single case of broken processes made by the boy's side.

Finally, Zhao villagers do not see marriage as a relationship between two individuals but see it as a process through which social relations are formed. A important implication is that a social relation, according to Zhao villagers, is made, created, negotiated, established in a dynamic process rather than given. Establishment of marriage ties constitutes one of the most important fields of social relations by which Zhao villagers are able to extend their networks of economic co-operation and political alliance into the neighbouring villages.

3.3 Marriage Finance

With respect to marriage payment, there exist both forms of 'payment' in Zhaojiahe, that is - if we can temporarily call them so - 'bride-price' and 'dowry'. This is by no means exceptional for the Chinese rural communities. I shall in this section discuss three significant aspects of marriage finance in Zhaojiahe, that is, 'bride-price', 'dowry' and wedding expenses.

Li: payment from the bridegroom's side to the bride's side

The term *li* is used in the area for payment that flows from the bridegroom's side to the bride's side. In comparison with the mandarin usage in which this flow of payment is usually called *cai-li*, Zhao villagers simply say *li* to indicate what the bridegroom's family has to present

to the bride family. The Chinese character *cai* is an adjective, that is 'colourful'; while *li* can be translated as 'gift'. It may be worth noting that, in Chinese, the character *li* is also used as 'politeness'. Both 'gift' and 'politeness' are written and pronounced in Chinese in the same way.

In Zhaojiahe, there is a difference between *li* used in its general sense and *li* in its specific sense. In its general sense, *li* is used for describing the whole payment from the bridegroom's side to the bride's side; while in its specific sense, the term is used for indicating the money paid in cash by the bridegroom's side to the bride's side. That is to say, the whole payment has to be partially made in cash. For the specific usage of *li*, I will translate it as 'money gift'. Apart from 'money gift', the other major form of *li* - in its general usage - is clothes prepared for the bride. Except for other major preparations such as building a new room for the couple, which is a responsibility of the bridegroom's family, two families involved in a marriage process have to negotiate about the quality and quantity of clothes and amount of 'money gift'.

Zhao villagers do not talk about the money gift in direct terms but, rather, in terms of 'pieces' (*fen*). The character *fen* is either translated as 'share' or as 'portion'. It was used in the village to measure the amount of money gift that needed to be negotiated. One *fen* of *li* (i.e. the money gift) was 240 *yuan* when I was in the village. Instead of talking about how much money the bridegroom's family needed to pay, Zhao villagers talked about how many *fen* of *li*, that is how many 'pieces' of the money gift, they had to present. When I was in the village, it took me a long time to understand what they were talking about when they discussed the financial issues of marriage. Firstly, I could not catch the idea of 'gift' which was counted in 'pieces'. Secondly, even when I vaguely started to know what they were discussing, I still did not know how much one *fen* of *li* was. For instance, a Zhao villager would say, "That *wu* ('family') is very greedy. They ask for three *fen* of *li* (i.e. three 'pieces' of the money gift). How dare they?"

As for the question of how many 'pieces' of the money gift is required, that is how much money in cash has to be passed from the bridegroom's side to the bride's side, there are variations from one household to another due to their different economic conditions and social status. However, as Zhao villagers reported, during the period from the late 1970s to the early 1980s, an agreement about the money gift between two sides might have most likely been one and a half 'pieces', that is, 360 *yuan*. It is extremely difficult to compare the value of this amount of money without particular purposes in mind. Variations in expenditure from household to household make the comparison more difficult. In 1984, the average annual income per capita for peasants in Chengcheng County was 176.8 *yuan*.[15] With reference to this figure, 360 *yuan* is a considerably large amount of money, which amounts to twice as much as what a villager earned for the whole year in 1984.[16] In recent years, both the rapid economic development and the climbing inflation rates made the bride's side demand more. There was an increasing tendency of presenting more cash to the bride's side, according to Zhao villagers, in recent years. In the early 1990s, according to Zhao villagers, to present two or three 'pieces' of *li* to the bride's side was common. A young

[15]Peasant annual income per capita increased to nearly 400 *yuan* in 1990 in Chengcheng County.

[16]However, statistical figures are often illusory. When we account for how much a Chinese peasant earns, we often neglect the fact that many necessary materials that a Chinese peasant obtains for his daily life are either free or uncountable. For instance, Zhao villagers hardly spend anything on materials for housing construction. They grow trees and take mud from the hills around the village to make bricks by themselves. For more discussions of their livelihood, see Chapter 1 and 5.

villager - if he was not boasting - told me that one of his relatives had paid 1000 *yuan* to the bride's family.

Apart from the money gift, another amount of money is required and entitled as *li-niang-fei*. It is a three character word. *Li*, with the second tone, is different from *li* ('money gift') of the third tone, and they are completely different characters in written form. *Li* of the second tone is 'to leave' or 'to go away'. *Niang* is 'mother' and *fei* is 'expense'. To put them together, it becomes "the expense for the bride leaving her mother". *Li-niang-fei* seems to indicate that here affinity is signified by uterine relations. As we shall see in the following chapter, the significance of the relationship between a mother and her daughter is often stressed on many social occasions by way of exchanging steamed bread. *Li-niang-fei* also needs to be negotiated. In the 1980s, "the expense for the bride leaving her mother" was usually 40 *yuan*, as recalled by Zhao villagers. With the one and half *fen* of *li* by then, it would add up to 400 *yuan* of cash payment for an ordinary marriage.

With respect to the way in which the money gift is talked about in the village, a question needs to be raised: to what extent is the sociological discussion of marriage finance verifiable without considering how Zhao villagers themselves talk about these issues? It seems to me that, in Zhaojiahe, not only amounts of, so to speak, bride-price negotiated in the marriage process need to be examined but also, more importantly, the way that Zhao villagers categorise these amounts of money requires a close inspection. Beyond the question of whether the bride-price increased during the period of the economic reforms, we also need to ask: how has the way of talking about it changed recently?

There is some evidence, although without statistical justification, that may show certain changes in adopting new categories for Zhao villagers to articulate marriage negotiations. First, young people, those who were married but had not yet reached the age of considering their children's marriage, showed their inclination to talk about the money gift in *zheng-shu* (literally, 'whole numbers') such as 'five hundred' *yuan* or 'eight hundred' *yuan* or so forth. As once a young villager of two little children said to his friends at a gathering, "It is too much trouble to count how many pieces of *li* and *li-niang-fei*. I would just give them (the bride's side) a *zheng-shu*. Who has the time to talk about how many pieces! Those old people, they have nothing to do, so they have time. I would not do that!" This is to say, young generations of Zhao parents, who are often in their thirties or early forties, seem to start to talk about the money gift differently, though it does not necessarily mean that they would talk differently when they confront a matchmaker who is usually an elderly person. Second, when Zhao villagers tried to show how prosperous and advanced people were in the *yuanshang* areas, they would often refer to the large 'whole numbers', such as a thousand *yuan*, that *yuanshang* villagers would pay as the money gift. In these situations, the notion of *fen* seems to be disappearing.

In the early 1990s, as part of the bride-price, Zhao villagers also had to prepare and present clothes to the bride. The money gift was in fact supposed to be transferred from the bridegroom's *wu* ('family') to the bride's *wu* ('family') but clothes, either in forms of different types of materials for clothing or in forms of ready-made dresses were by and large presented to the bride herself. As I was told, in order to complete the process of marriage, the bridegroom's

side needed to prepare about forty pieces of clothes for the bride. What struck me most was the fact that there seemed to be a consensus among Zhao villagers about the number of clothes - forty pieces - that needed to be prepared. Although there might be variations from household to household, when asked, Zhao villagers tended to reply with the fairly uniform, affirmative answer.[17] This invites the question of the extent to which the consensus is itself a social practice.

As for what kind of materials the bride preferred, Zhao villagers had also a consensus: machine-made cloth. That is, the materials that they had to buy from markets. Zhao women spun and wove, capable of making beautiful hand-made cloth and clothes, but they preferred materials that they had to purchase. As I was told, during the period of people's communes, it was fine to present the self-made cloth or clothes for the bride since Zhao villagers had little money to purchase these things from markets. But, this changed in the past ten years. Brides nowadays demand things bought from markets. Zhao villagers insisted on their belief that a higher price means the better quality. To my mind, it is not so much concerned with what they feel about what kind of materials are better but, rather, with how much these materials can demonstrate their status of economic power. If a bride was offered only home-made cloth and clothes, her family would feel they were being humiliated or otherwise thought of as powerless. Under this circumstance, style and fashion were considered much less important than types of materials and prices of these materials. When I was in the village, wool and leather were thought of as the best to wear in the village because they were made of the most expensive materials; while cotton cloth was thought to be least valuable with regard to the marriage process since every woman was able to produce it at home.

Other forms of *li* (bride-price, so to speak) such as pieces of self-made table cloth or a box of facial cream were also popular in the early 1990s, but they were neither required nor arranged by the matchmaker. It was not very unusual for a girl to wear golden rings or chains, but with regard to the bride-price, these things did not have to be prepared. No engagement or marriage rings were necessary in Zhaojiahe and the completion of a process of marriage was rather associated with and signified by the feast.

Except for *li*, that is the payment from the boy's side to the girl's side, the bridegroom's family is also responsible for preparing a place for the couple to live. The place is either a new room (often a new *yao)* or even a new *yuanzi* ('courtyard'). Preparation of bedding is another important piece of work. Two kinds of bedding are needed when sleeping, that is, respectively, quilts and cotton-padded mattresses. There is a clearly divided responsibility between the two sides as far as the preparation of bedding for the new couple is concerned. The bride's side is responsible for making the quilts, though cotton needed to fill in these quilts has to be supplied by the bridegroom's side; while the bridegroom's family is in charge of preparing cotton-padded mattresses. Underlying this division there is an elementary rule at work, which concerns kinship classification. Things coming from *zijiawu* are supposed to be used underneath (mattresses),

[17]There are two difficulties in investigating how many pieces of clothes were actually passed to the bride. The first difficulty is that individual villagers were often reluctant to answer specific questions concerning quantities of clothes. It may be partly because that marriage finance was not supposed to be talked about openly. The second difficulty is that, since the marriage process often lasted for several years and pieces of clothes were not passed to the bride all at once, it might be difficult to recall the accurate quality and quantity of presentation.

which is explained by Zhao villagers as "relying upon" *(kao);* while things coming from relatives are supposed to be used on the top as coverings (quilts), which is interpreted by Zhao villagers as "helping" *(bang).* This division exists also in the uses of quilts and mattresses for covering the dead in funerals, which I shall discuss in another chapter.

'Dowry'

As Freedman pointed out, dowry in the traditional Chinese society played a symbolic role to demonstrate the power of the bride's family rather than transferring a substantial amount of property (1966: 55; cf. Croll 1981: 113). In Zhaojiahe, there is no money transfer from the bride's side to the bridegroom's side. Money flows only in one direction. With respect to - to call it temporarily - 'dowry', Zhao villagers referred to what was brought by the bride when she came to the wedding. It usually included bedding and daily goods such as mirrors, washing bowls, sheets and so forth. It is worth noting that all the things the bride brings to her wedding will be displayed in public. This, in a way, may justify the idea that Freedman proposed, that is, 'dowry' is 'symbolic' in the sense of demonstrating the power of the bride's family. It may need to be pointed out that any gift received at weddings from any guest also has to be displayed in public, though it may not be displayed as long and obvious as dowry is. With respect to the matter of 'symbolic demonstration', it is important to note that Zhao villagers do not have a schematic, formalised, unified way of discussing, so to speak, dowry. There is no such way that one can adopt to discuss 'dowry' in general terms. When Zhao villagers talked about 'dowry', they were employing words and phrases of different, various, changeable vocabularies of personal choices. For instance, as Yin'ai - my host's wife in Dawa - once said to me, "I have to prepare something for my daughter when she is going to get married. I have only one daughter, so I want to make it properly. I have prepared quite a few things for her, but I have to know whether it is enough". Then Yin'ai moved on to talk about what kind of things she had prepared for her daughter's wedding. Neither Yin'ai nor others - either men or women - actually used any specific word to indicate a general category of 'dowry'. This is rather a striking difference. When Zhao villagers talked about *li,* that is, the bride-price, they always employed specific terms derived from the formalised vocabularies; while, on the other hand, when they talked about things that the bride had to prepare, they applied personal phrases. If 'dowry' is 'symbolically' used to demonstrate the power of the bride's family, which implies a reiteration of social stratification (see for instance Goody 1972), why is there not a set of vocabulary to discuss it? In other words, why should Zhao villagers allow individual styles when talking about 'dowry'?

Simply, this difference shows that what needs to be properly negotiated through a process of marriage is not what the bride's family has to prepare for her. The focus, the key element, the core of the marriage negotiation concerns the payment that the bridegroom's side makes to the bride's side. This is what marriage is all about to Zhao villagers. This is why Zhao villagers do not talk about 'dowry' in general terms. However, this does not mean that Zhao villagers are not concerned about their 'symbolic demonstration' of their social status and economic power. They are. But they do not show this by way of preparing extensive 'dowries'. Zhao villagers do not demonstrate their social status and economic power at weddings; rather,

they demonstrate their power and status by presenting extensive gifts at funerals, which is called *xing-men-he.* When a Zhao villager dies, his mother's, wife's and daughters' families will present as many gifts as they can at the funeral. Let us be reminded: marriage is a family matter and what a bride brings to her wedding is what her parents prepare for the couple. It is a restricted action. While, when a man dies, relatives from three sides - his mother, his wife, his daughters - will all join the funeral and present a wide range of gifts. Funerals thus provide a better opportunity for demonstrating the 'symbolic' power of both sides - *zijiawu* and relatives. This is why Zhao villagers do not see 'dowry' as the primary means of the 'symbolic demonstration'.

But, in recent years, with the advent of the economic reforms and the increasing tendency of economic stratification within the village, there is a growing concern about what they should prepare for their daughters to bring to the wedding. Zhao villagers start to see themselves as competitors within the village. Especially for those who are better off or have connections outside the village, they start to consider the possibility of using what they prepare for the daughter as a means of demonstration of their status and power. The following two case studies show a comparison of 'dowries' between, so to speak, a typical, ordinary family and a better off family whose daughter is a nurse. This comparison shows that, along with the economic stratification, there grows a consciousness of viewing the society as a more stratified, less equal entity than before.

Case 3.1 Honglu's bride's 'dowry'

Honglu was serving the army in Shijiazhuang, a city in Hebei Province, when he got married on the 12th of February 1992 (the eighth of the first month of the Chinese lunar year). In the winter of 1992, a couple of weeks before the Chinese New Year, Honglu went back to Xipo, a village in Heyang County (see Map 7), to visit his parents. Honglu's mother was from Zhaojiahe (i.e. Wanbin's father's brother's son's sister) and her first husband died ten years ago. Honglu's mother remarried in Xipo and lived with Honglu's step-father. Honglu was the only son of his mother's previous marriage. As some villagers from Dawa commented, Honglu's step-father was a very good person and he tried very hard to arrange a good marriage for Honglu. Others said, it was because Honglu's father was dead, so his step-father had to be enthusiastic about Honglu's marriage, otherwise people would say nasty things about him. Honglu's wedding had not been finalised until he came back to Xipo. When they told me this, I was a little bewildered. For it seemed to me that they did not have to plan a wedding in advance. As I was told later by Zhao villagers, it was because the bride's family wanted her to get married quickly.

Due to its location, Xipo is a half *yuanxia* and half *yuanshang* village[18] since part of the village is situated in the valley. As I was told by Wanbin and Wanyou, the economic condition of Honglu's family was ordinary. The bride came from a neighbouring village and, as I was told, the bride's family was poorer than Honglu's. The couple had engaged in their marriage process for three and half years, though they seldom saw each other.[19] According to Honglu's mother's brothers in Dawa, the bride's family was eager to get their daughter married because they needed money to help pay the medical bills for the bride's father. It was also said that army soldiers were thought of as good partners since soldiers might have a chance to stay in the cities after they finished their service in the army. That is probably the reason that, in his wedding, Honglu was all the time wearing the army uniform, including his heavy, big round hat with a red star on it. On the 15th of February, Honglu left the village for Shijiazhuang and the bride moved to live with his parents. The following is a list of things brought by the bride to the wedding:

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[18] *Yuanshang* and *yuanxia* are two geographic terms which are used to mean 'up-on-plain' and 'down-to-valley'. For a full discussion of this usage and its social significance, see Chapter 1, Section 1.6.

[19] I did not have chance to ask the couple themselves whether they wrote to each other frequently, but I did ask the question to a young man at the wedding, who claimed to be Honglu's best friend. He said with a smile, "Oh, no, no, we have no time. We don't like writing letters".

i) a desk lamp; ii) a pair of electroplated steel chairs with red leather covers; iii) a pair of cabinets, approximately 110x60x50 cm; iv) a self-made wooden dressing table with a three-fold mirror; v) eight quilts of different colours; vi) about twenty pieces of sheets and cloth.

Zhao villagers commented upon this 'dowry' by saying that it represented a common case for the ordinary families. When asked, they also pointed out the fact that the bride's family did not have to prepare too much except for their duty to prepare the quilts. In Honglu's case, what I found is that the bride did not bring particular things restricted for her own use, except she may have needed the dressing table more than the bridegroom would. Things that Honglu's bride brought can all be shared by the couple.

Case 3.2 Hongxia's 'dowry'

Hongxia, who was working in the Wanzhuang (township) clinic as a nurse, is the only daughter of my host, Wanbin, in Dawa. Her wedding took place on the first of May, 1992. The bridegroom, who worked in a bank as security guard in Chengcheng County, came originally from another *yuanxia* village in Jiaodao township (see Map 5). Wanbin's family did not like the bridegroom for two reasons. First, he was simply a security guard but not a local official. Second, his family was also from a *yuanxia* village. Yin'ai, Wanbin's wife, said many times to me that she wanted her daughter to be married with someone from *yuanshang*. There were problems and disputes between two sides. Basically, Wanbin's family thought that their daughter deserved someone better than the candidate bridegroom. Wanbin complained to his *zijiawu* brothers that the candidate bridegroom was not even an official and how he could match a nurse (not a peasant). As a matter of fact, the bridegroom's family was quite well off since three sons of the family all worked in the town and earned wages. But, still, Wanbin's family disliked and looked down upon the bridegroom's family. Everything that the bridegroom's parents did was said to be wrong and criticised by Wanbin's family. For instance, when the bridegroom's father brought cotton to Wanbin's courtyard, Yin'ai criticised the way he did it by saying that the cotton could have been processed more carefully. Yin'ai insisted that this was because the bridegroom's family did not know what the notion of politeness was. Under these circumstances, Wanbin's family insisted on preparing a good wedding which had to be held in the county town rather than in the bridegroom's village. The bridegroom's family did not agree with this proposal at the beginning since they wanted the wedding to be done, as everyone else did, in their *yuanzi* ('courtyard'). This was important for them, that is, to show to the village that their son was married with a nurse in a clinic. After several rounds of hostile and perilous discussions between two sides, the agreement was finally reached. It was agreed that the wedding would be held in a town restaurant. Wanbin's side succeeded. However, Wanbin's family made a long list of 'dowry' for the new couple. Here is the list:

i) a dining table with electroplated steel legs; ii) a pair of electroplated steel chairs with red leather covers; iii) a pair of sofas, home-made with dark leather covers; iv) a home-made wardrobe with a three-wing door and a mirror in the middle, light colour with a golden rim; v) nine quilts; vi) a huge modern thermos flask; vii) a large mirror with a cat on it as decoration (for Hongxia's use only); viii) a tea-set; ix) six pairs of hand-made cloth shoes with beautifully embroidered flowers and birds on them (for Hongxia's use only); x) a pair of embroidered pillowcases, one in red and the other in green; xi) a pair of home-made aprons, one in pink and the other in blue (for Hongxia's use only); xii) a pair of quilted jackets with flowers, one in red and the other in green (for Hongxia's use only); xiii) a pair of cotton-padded trousers (for Hongxia's use only); xiv) four embroidered pillow-covers; xv) different kinds of both self-made and machine-made sheets and cloth.

Not only was the quantity larger but also the quality of Hongxia's 'dowry' was much better than that of Honglu's bride. To make a comparison of these two cases, we can see some interesting differences. First, although Honglu was a soldier, his family did not feel superior to the bride's family. Despite the fact that the bride's side wanted to get married earlier, Honglu's

side was still obliged to satisfy financial demanding from the bride's side. In Hongxia's case, it is different. As Wanbin's family saw the situation, Hongxia could have got what they believed to be a better partner in terms of social status. That is why Wanbin's family tried to make troubles for the bridegroom's family. Wanbin's family had demonstrated to their *zijiawu* and relatives that Hongxia was not a villager but a nurse who did not live in the village any longer and argued that, therefore, their daughter's wedding had to be held in the town restaurant. The fact that Hongxia did not manage to find an official, and her groom also came from a *yuanxia* village, made the necessity of holding the wedding in the town inevitable. This is why Yin'ai was critical of the bridegroom's parents, because she needed to show her superior status. Under this circumstance, Yin'ai said many times: "I can't let my daughter marry without proper preparations. Other people would laugh at us."

Second, Honglu's family is radically different from Wanbin's in the sense that two of Wanbin's sons have gone to universities. The two families have different self evaluations. In the case of Honglu's parents, what they seek is to help Honglu to get married, to find him a bride, to recruit a wife for the family; while, for Wanbin' s family, what they are concerned with is, rather, how they could find a better partner and to negotiate a better wedding for their daughter. As a matter of fact, Hongxia's marriage was introduced by a matchmaker in the town and Wanbin and Yin'ai did not intervene in the early stage of their daughter's marriage process. Two families are seeking different goals, applying different strategies. My suggestion is that, alongside the economic stratification in the past decade, there is an increasing tendency in which Zhao villagers see themselves as being able to make their own choices and act differently. My argument is that there appears to be a more diversified, more differentiated set of strategies to install 'dowry' than that of 'bride-price' in the past decade. Some Zhao villagers may consider 'dowry' as a means of demonstration of 'symbolic power', while others may not think so.

Thirdly, in order to reveal the different strategies that Zhao villagers adopt to present 'dowry', we need to look at whom the dowry is prepared for. There is a major difference between the above two cases. In Hongxia's 'dowry', there are several things which are prepared only for the bride (items vii, ix, xi, xii, xiii); while in the case of Honglu's bride, there is nothing which is supposed to be exclusively used by the bride. The question is: for whom is it prepared for? When a Zhao family wants to stress their family status and social significance, they will specially prepare something for their own daughter's exclusive usage.

Expenditure on the wedding

Although the whole process of marriage involves spending, the wedding expenditure is still considered as a big expense in the village. According to Zhao villagers, almost half of the whole expense needs to be spent upon the wedding which includes the pre-wedding shopping trip. A large amount of money has to be spent on a wedding feast. In Honglu's case, more than four hundred people as formal guests joined the feast on the wedding day. Guixiang, Honglu's mother, told me that 1500 *yuan* was spent for the wedding feast and more than 1000 *yuan* had been spent on the shopping trip in the previous week. The whole amount of money spent on Honglu's marriage was said to be as high as 5500 *yuan*. This included neither preparation of the

'new room' for him nor labour help from either his *zijiawu* or relatives. When talking about expenses, Zhao villagers only count cash.

It is difficult to make a general estimate about marriage expenses in the village. Honglu's case was not extraordinary in many aspects but, in terms of money transferred from one side to another, as I was told, it was not usual. As Honglu's mother's brother said, it was because the girl's family was quite poor and her parents needed money badly, so they squeezed Honglu's parents for more cash. For instance, the bride's family did not come for the engagement feast; instead they asked for an amount of money which was supposed to be equivalent to it. Some villagers disagreed with what the matchmaker did since they thought it was wrong to ask for money for the engagement, instead of coming to join the engagement banquet. Others stressed the point that Honglu would not have been so lucky if the bride's family was not under the pressure of shortage of money.

In general, Zhao villagers agreed with the view that at least 2000-3000 *yuan* was needed to accomplish a marriage process in the period from the late 1980s to the early 1990s. The amount of money did not usually include the value of home-made goods and costs of labour of themselves. As Zhao villagers believed, expenditure for marriage was increasing rapidly. This was true for both *yuanshang* or *yuanxia* villagers. As a matter of fact, in 1990, the village committee announced a regulation to restrict the growing tendency of 'extravagant' spending on weddings and funerals. The regulation was in print and distributed to many households but it did not work since the villagers did not comply with it. The explanation that Zhao villagers often gave for the increase of spending on weddings was the increasing difficulties of recruiting brides from the neighbouring villages.

3.4 The Matchmaking

The marriage process concerns negotiations of various kinds, which have to be done through and by the matchmaker. The social function of matchmaking can be understood as part of a more general process, concerning establishment and maintenance of social relations, in which two sides of a relation need to be mediated by a third party. Certain issues cannot be discussed openly or face to face in Zhaojiahe. Both terms, *meiren* (literally, 'matchmaker') and *zhongjianren* (literally, 'go-between'), are applied in daily conversations. But there is a slight difference in connotation between these two terms. 'Matchmaker' is restrictively applied for the marriage negotiation, while 'go-between' can be used for various social occasions. In the case of a marriage negotiation, two terms are sometimes interchangeable.

To initiate a marriage process, Zhao villagers turn to either a relative or an acquaintance and ask him/her to "look out for suitable persons" for their children. For instance, they may say, *ge wo-wu wa kan zhe dian* (literally, 'keep your eyes open for my family's children'). The initiation is commonly carried out by the boy's family, although the other way around is not impossible, particularly in the case of those who have no son.

In the past ten years, no marriage in Zhaojiahe was not negotiated through a matchmaker, no matter whether the parties involved were educated or not. Marriage ties have to

be established by a third party. Two families involved do not talk to each other directly and all details of negotiations have to be accomplished through a matchmaker. The matchmaker travels between the two sides, passing required messages and representing both sides. According to those who were thought to enjoy making matches, the core of the technique of making a match is to persuade both sides to compromise. A matchmaker would neither confront nor refute his or her clients directly, nor agree with them completely. The matchmaker always tries to mediate demands from both sides. When I was in the village, although I did not observe directly how a matchmaker was negotiating with two families because marriage negotiations were often conducted secretly, I managed to talk to several villagers who were well known in the village for 'enjoying' making matches. Particularly, one old villager from Xibang, who did not want me to cite his name, talked to me about his view of matchmaking technique on a sunny afternoon while our sitting at the edge of a reaping yard. After having presented him several filter cigarettes which I had brought with me from Beijing, he nodded his permission for me to record his speech. The following is a reconstruction from what I recorded.

Case 3.3 A matchmaker's story

I am not boasting. I have done at least about fourteen or fifteen matches. They were all successful. The proverb is: if you can't make a match, don't start it *(bu cheng bu wei mei)*. The main thing that a matchmaker has to talk to both sides is about money. During 'Mao's time', we were not allowed to talk about 'bride-price' explicitly but we were doing it implicitly. Matchmakers are often closely connected to one side, either the bridegroom's or the bride's. It is always the same problem: the bride's side demands more and the groom's side wants to pay less than asked. Take my last match as an example. That was a year ago, when my mother's sister's son asked me to look out for his daughter. I thought that Shanghe's son (in Zhaojiahe) would be suitable. One afternoon in winter, I knew that they would be home and I went to visit them. I did not talk about their son's marriage first. Instead, I was talking about other things with them for a start. We had chatted for a quite while and then I asked, pretending that I did not know whether their son was engaged or not:

"We have chatted *(pian-han)* for such a long time, I forget to ask you whether your son has already 'talked through'[20] a process. I thought your child *(wa)* would be no less than eighteen, wouldn't he?"

"Yeah, he is about eighteen. But not yet 'talked through'. Our child is well-behaved *(lao -shi)* and timid."

"Certainly, how could I not know **your** child. A good child."

(Pause for a while, and then the potential bridegroom's father started the conversation again.)

"I am afraid that you may have to look out for our child. When you have time, help me to 'talk through' a bride for our child." (When the old villager talked to me about his matchmaking experience, he stressed the importance of allowing the potential bridegroom's father to ask him to look out for his child first. Half proud and half boasting, the old villager told me that he always had a way to make others feel that they were asking him to do a favour for them rather than that he was trying to attract their son.)

"Of course, no matter how busy I am, I will have to do this thing for **our** child."

(Pause. The matchmaker started later.)

"I actually know a girl *(nu)* in Yangjiahe. Her conditions *(tiao-jian)* are quite nice. Why don't I tell you her conditions? You can see whether it is fine for you."

"Why not?"

(The matchmaker then introduces information about the girl whom he had already known. I asked specifically the question of what information a matchmaker needed to introduce at this stage. The reply was: the family condition and level of education.)

After having heard the introduction, conversation resumed and the host said:

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[20]In the village, to ask whether one's marriage issue is settled, Zhao villagers will use the phrase 'to talk through (a marriage process)'. I shall discuss this usage in detail in the following section.

"Fine, Duo-ge (i.e. the elder brother), I am afraid that you would have to talk to them for our child."

"I will, if they agree, I think we would let our children meet each other first and see what they say."

"That is fine *(nong-xing).*

A few days later. The old villager told Shanghe that the girl's side agreed and it was arranged that the two young persons would meet in the old villager's house. After the young couple met, the matchmaker visited Shanghe again and started the conversation.

"You know, the young people seem to have no objection. If we carry on, how would you suggest we should do it?"

"Our family cannot be compared with others'. In the past few years our family was not very prosperous. Last year, our child's grandfather died, as you know, and we had to 'drop' *(nao-teng)* a large amount of money. Every year, we have to support two pupils in our family. That is also expenditure. One pupil needs at least a thousand *yuan* a year."

"You see what you have said! How could I not know your condition?! I have already told this to the bride's side. Our child is a good child. That is the most important thing. They understand. But, from our view point, even if they did not ask for a penny, wouldn't we have to prepare something for them? They are 'selling' their daughter, we can't pay nothing, can we?"

"You are right. Duoge. We trust you. You go to talk to them."

The matchmaker went to talk to the bride's side.

"You know, it is true that Shanghe's family was financially tight last year. But this family has a big potential. Look at their two sons! Both are well educated and good at everything."

"To bring up a daughter is not easy. Think about what I have done for her since she was born. Difficult. Think about all expenses and energy that I have spent to deal with her. I have to ask for some compensation. Furthermore, things I request for my daughter will belong to her and she will bring them to her husband."

"Don't say too much. How much would you like to ask?' (This is because the matchmaker knows the bride's family better than the bridegroom's, I assumed. So he is more frank with the bride's family.)

"We would never ask more than what other people usually ask. How much other people ask? I will demand the same. Don't need to be too accurate. For instance, in Dangjiahe, when the son of the household at the east end of the village got married, they asked for four 'pieces of *li*'. I don't want too much. What about three or four pieces of *li?*"

"Wa, my mother! My great-grandmother! What are you talking about? Where can we find such a large amount of money? Where can we ask for that? Aren't you afraid of being laughed at by others? Don't you know the custom of our village, no family has ever demanded more than two pieces."

"Nonsense! In the year before last year, when Sanbao's daughter got married, hadn't they asked for three pieces? Many have done that. How can you say that you do not know? Plus, nowadays, money is 'rough' *(mao:* meaning less valued than before)."

"That is too much. I am afraid that they can't make it. I think the maximum amount is two and half pieces."

(Silent for a while)

"Two and half pieces are worth nothing but I follow the suggestion of my elder brother."

The matchmaker went to visit the bridegroom's side.

"Just after I finished my work in the field, I came to tell you what I had talked about with the girl's mother. They said they would not ask much. But we have to think that they are not easy to bring up a daughter. If we were they, we would also need to 'sell' our daughter for something. Don't you agree?"

"My elder brother is right. We got to spend some for our child's marriage."

"Nowadays, money is 'rough'. With the same amount of money, you can buy less than half than it used to do. In Yuanjiahe, you know, the household at the east end of the village paid four pieces of *li* when their son got married."

"That is too much. I am afraid I have problems with that. I have two pupils, you see?"

"Yes, we can't do that. Our family condition is different. The girl's side asked for three pieces."

"That is a hell of a lot."

"I talked to them for you and finally they agreed two and half pieces. I think that was fair. You can't get a daughter-in-law for free, can you?"

"That is fine. I listen to my elder brother."
(The basic negotiation is completed.)

The above example is only the starting part of the whole negotiation. Through the whole process of marriage, negotiations are carried out continuously. The matchmaker is constantly in touch with both sides.

There are variations from one case to another with respect to marriage negotiations in the village but the tactics involved in such a process can be in some way outlined. First, in negotiation, successful negotiators always induce others to speak out what the negotiators themselves want to say. As we have seen in the above example, when the matchmaker came to talk to Shanghe, the matchmaker pretended that they happened to come across the topic of Shanghe's son's marriage, although the matchmaker had already prepared to introduce his relative's daughter to Shanghe's son. Zhao villagers, especially the elderly, often told me with pride that they were able to tell what other people were really thinking. Trying to make other people say what Zhao villagers themselves want to say is a tactic. Second, dependent on situations, Zhao villagers can easily switch from one position to another. In the case of matchmaking, the matchmaker does not seem to take any side as given and his relationship with either family relies upon his achievement in the process of negotiation. For instance, a matchmaker can easily speak of 'we' or 'our' to both sides. Third, a great deal of discussion involved in a marriage process is carried out like bargaining. They always engage in a bargaining position in respect to financial issues when negotiating with an 'other'.

For Zhao villagers, certain things, which are often concerned with transaction and money, cannot be discussed face to face among *zijiawu* or relatives and they have to be negotiated through go-betweens. Marriage is one of these fields in which a go-between is required. As one kind of social practices, Zhao villagers refuse to talk about money or finance with their *zijiawu* or relatives. Zhao villagers will feel terribly awkward without a go-between doing the talk for them when a marriage negotiation takes place. Let us have a look at Hongxia's case (see Case 3.2). Hongxia is the daughter of my host, Wanbin, in Dawa and she got married in May 1992. She graduated from a district nursing school and worked in a county clinic nearby. Her husband - then fiancé - was introduced by a far relative. Both Hongxia and her fiancé left their villages and lived in towns. According to Hongxia, the matchmaker told them that, because they were both well-educated persons, the matchmaker would not carry on her duty to negotiate for both families and the couple themselves should know how to continue. This is a case in which the matchmaker (or 'introducer' - *jie-shao-ren)* did not complete the role of a mediator through the whole process, which led to serious consequences.

I remember that, in a hot, sunny day in April, I was surprised by a family banquet prepared for lunch. Eight dishes were prepared, four cold dishes and four hot ones. It was the first time for a long while that everybody in the family respectfully addressed me as 'Teacher Liu' ('Liu Laoshi'), and invited me to sit down at the main dining table next to a stranger who I later knew was Hongxia's fiancee's father. The host, Wanbin, was of course also at the table. A special kind of Chinese spirits was poured into everyone's glass. Everything was very formal but there

was an unbelievable silence. Wanbin carried out his duty to persuade me and the other guest to eat more but did not talk to any of us. Everybody in the room was so polite to me that I felt something wrong. I had not yet finished my bowl, Hongxia came over to take it away to add more soup for me. There were only twice that the other guest exchanged a simple word with Wanbin about the weather (not only the British use comments on weather to communicate nothing!). Although it was warm outside, our conversation inside was frozen.

Later on, Wanbin's neighbours told me that, because there was no go-between, Wanbin could not ask for a bride price directly. The other side seemed to take advantage of the situation and pretended that they did not need to pay a substantiated bride price. Both sides showed their hostility towards each other by means of ignoring their potential partner. According to Wanbin's neighbours, that was the reason that Wanbin showed his perfect politeness in order to inform the other that he should also play the game fairly. As I believe, this is also the reason that I was treated extraordinarily well at the dining table.

This conflict continued for a few weeks. The boy's side surrendered in may ways in the end. In a couple of weeks in April, Hongxia's fiancé and his father frequently visited Wanbin's family, trying to make a settlement. One day Yangkai's mother, who shared a *yuanzi* with Wanbin, pointed to the departing motorcycle of Hongxia's fiancé at the other end of the village and said to me, "Oh, this is better. The boy just presented Wanbin another five hundred *yuan*. Wanbin should be satisfied with this now." It is strange that Yangkai's mother was able to know what was going on within Wanbin's house immediately, since the whole process of negotiation was such a secret that nobody could see or hear anything about their money arrangement. I was not informed about this by any member of Wanbin's family but, often seemingly to be murmuring to herself, I heard Wanbin's mother repeatedly saying that 'there is no go-between *(zhong-ren)*, there is no way to talk properly'.

However, there is no professional matchmaker in the village though certain persons are thought of as suitable candidates. They could be either men or women, though always old and married. Relatives, acquaintances and neighbours are all possible candidates. Although everyone needs a matchmaker when he 'talks through' a marriage, the reputation of being a matchmaker is often bad. When I was in the village, I saw Zhao villagers frequently making rude jokes about matchmakers in front of them. I was told that matchmakers were those who wanted to eat free from one household to another. Matchmakers were not always portrayed as bad or irresponsible, but always as gluttonous, by Zhao villagers. It may need to be briefly pointed out that for Zhao villagers social relationships are often signified through ways in which different kinds of food are presented and represented. So criticism of others is often undertaken by means of attacking their attitudes towards food and eating.

On the other hand, the matchmakers themselves often complained about the difficulties of making a match. When I talked to Wanyou, who had a reputation of being capable of making good matches, he kept saying that he did not like doing it and would not do it again because it was always too difficult to make both sides happy about the arrangement of marriage finance. The matchmaker would often be blamed by both families if there was any dispute between the two sides. Wanyou remembered that, once, he made a match and everything seemed to be

smooth until the shopping trip before the wedding. Wanyou accompanied them to the county town for a shopping day. They started in the early morning from one shop to another. The girl was accompanied by her parents and her uncles and aunts. As Wanyou said, the girl always chose the most expensive pieces of cloth and wanted everything she liked. At about noon the bridegroom's father started to sweat since, as agreed before through Wanyou, the bridegroom's father had only prepared eight hundred *yuan* for the day and it was almost gone already. The co-operation collapsed in the early afternoon and a severe quarrel took place between the two sides. Both sides did not directly blame each other but, rather, cursed Wanyou together, telling him that he was a traitor. This occurred in front of one of the shops when the bridegroom's father finally could not afford to pay any more. The bride's side threatened to breach the marriage process, which made the bridegroom's family feel really scared since they had already spent a lot on their son's marriage. In the end, the bridegroom's father had to ask for help from one of his close *zijiawu* who was working in the county town. Money was borrowed and peace thus resumed. But the whole expenditure of this trip doubled in the end.

Even though Wanyou stressed the difficult side of matchmaking, he did not actually give up his effort of making more matches. When I prepared to leave the village in the summer of 1992, I heard of his making another match.

Although without exception, marriage negotiations required a matchmaker, Zhao villagers did not talk about the process of marriage as 'arranged marriage'. No report suggested any resistance from those whose marriages were 'arranged' by their parents in Zhaojiahe.[21] As we have seen, the unmarried young people were rather silent about their own marriage issues. The negotiation was less about bonds between two parties involved or their personal attributes, but was rather more about different stages of the process and how arrangements concerning these stages should be accomplished between the two families. For instance, Zhao villagers often remembered with amazing accuracy how many tables were set up for the wedding of their neighbour's son, or, in a case of their *zijiawu's* daughter's marriage several years ago, how many pieces of clothes were passed to the bride when the *kanwu* took place. Who is chosen is less important than how the arrangements of negotiations involved proceed, according to Zhao villagers. When I was in the village, I seldom heard Zhao villagers commenting upon personal attributes when they were talking about marriage issues. Once I raised the question directly to an old villager whose wife had died several years ago, asking him whether he would consider the looks of a woman if he was given the choice to remarry. He hesitated, "Er..., certainly, good *ren-cai* (that is, literally, 'personal abilities') should be a better condition. But nowadays, whatever a woman she is, she can definitely find a husband."

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[21]In the early fifties, the communist government promoted a campaign against the 'feudal marriage' in which the 'arranged marriage' was fiercely attacked because, as they believed, it made young people suffer. For a discussion and review of this campaign, see for instance Croll, 1981: 24-40.

3.5 Other Aspects of Marriage

According to Zhao villagers, marriage is a process which involves two families rather than two individuals. It is the details of the negotiations involved in the marriage process that excite Zhao villagers. I have tried earlier in this chapter to describe the particular way in which Zhao villagers carry out their marriage processes. Now I shall turn to four specific questions. What is the time that Zhao villagers consider their children's marriage? How do Zhao villagers view and comment upon those who are not married? What do Zhao villagers think about 're-marrying'? How do Zhao villagers see divorce?

A general term, *shuo-xia-la*,[22] is used in the village to refer to those who have been engaged in the process of marriage, particularly before the wedding. In this term, *shuo* is 'to talk'; *xia* is, literally, 'down', which is used in this context to mean something which has been fixed; *la* is an auxiliary word expressing the tense of completion. To put these three characters together, it means that a marriage has been fixed through words or by talking, which may be somewhat awkwardly translated as 'having talked through (a process of marriage)'. Anyone who has been in the process of marriage, even if he is still in the very first step, *tanhua*, will be described as a person of 'having talked through a process of marriage'. Zhao villagers do not talk about whether one is married, but rather talked about whether one has 'talked through a process of marriage'. In other words, it is not a matter of whether one has his wedding or goes for the official registration; it is rather a matter of whether one has already 'talked through'. For instance, one could say that X's son has already *shuo-xia-la* or Y's son has not yet *shuo-xia*. For the same reason, to initiate a marriage process, Zhao villagers often applied the word *shuo*. For instance, *Ni nan wa shuo xia xi-fu mei? Wo gei ni shuo yi ge* ('Has your child talked through a candidate bride? I could try to talk through one for him').

Therefore, for Zhao villagers, the notion of 'age at marriage' is vague since marriage is taken as a long process. What they are concerned about is whether their sons have been already engaged in the marriage process. The question may need to be rephrased slightly. What time do Zhao villagers consider to be the right time to 'talk their sons through' the process of marriage? Although there were variations from household to household in the early 1990s, Zhao villagers stressed the point: the earlier the better. As Wanyou once said to me, "What is the point of waiting, if sooner or later my son has to get married? As soon as my son returns from school, I will start to talk through a marriage for him." This statement bears a general characteristic. For Zhao villagers, when a child finishes his primary education which may vary from four to nine years, this is believed to be the time to consider his marriage. Since Zhao children go to school at different ages and they take either longer or shorter periods of study than the officially proposed time schedule to finish their primary education, it is difficult to generalise the age structure of school graduates. It could range from 14 to 22.

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[22]There is a difference between the mandarin and the local dialect in pronunciation. In the local dialect it should be spelt *shuehalue*.

According to Zhao villagers, the initiation of the marriage process for one's children began earlier in the past decade than it had in the period of people's communes. It was believed that the increasing difficulties of bride recruitment from the *yuanxia* villages made the parents act earlier than before.

Considerations for girls were different from those of boys in the village in the early 1990s. Girls seemed to have little difficulties in 'talking through a process', so, for girls, Zhao parents considered the question of which place the marriage ties of their daughters could and should be made to. Many Zhao villagers hoped that, like in the case of Hongxia, they could manage their daughters' marriage with *yuanshang* partners. All girls had no problem in finding partners. Apart from the old widows, no women were not living with their husbands. All young and adult women were married. Age at marriage is an issue which is only relevant for the son. Zhao villagers have to think about when they need to initiate a marriage process for their sons. There are men in the village who are not able to find partners.

As elsewhere in rural China, married life is thought to be the only way of living by Zhao villagers. It was pointless to raise the question whether, by choice, one would like to lead a single life, but there were a few cases in which young men failed to 'talk through' a marriage process. It is only when some villagers are not able to 'talk through' a marriage process that Zhao villagers will refer to their age. Let us take the following comment as an example. It was made by an old villager about a youth called Junwu: "I am afraid Junwu might be over 25 but he still has not managed to 'talk through' a process. I am afraid that he will probably never be able to do so. He is not a clever boy anyway. His family is too poor, and nobody wants their son." One's age is often used as evidence to show that someone is too old, or it is too late for him, to 'talk through' a marriage process. Zhao villagers, in turn, often categorise those (as well their families) who fail to manage to initiate a marriage process as insane *(xie)* or stupid or poor. When I was in the village, all those who were in their early twenties and had not yet 'talked through' a marriage process, were trying hard. Their families might have to pay more to the bride's side if their sons were thought to be too 'old', which often meant in their mid twenties. Among all Zhao villagers, there was only one man, Zunxi, who was already over thirty, who seemed to have given up the idea of trying to talk through a marriage process and decided to live as a single person. There was no problem for Zunxi to live in the village as a bachelor and Zhao villagers seemed to accept the fact. But, when Zunxi confronted outsiders, he felt it difficult to confess that he was single. Let us have a look at his story.

Case 3.4 Zunxi: a bachelor's story

Zunxi was a young man of thirty-two years old in 1992 and was not engaged in a marriage process. When Zunxi was sixteen, he went to Xi'an, the capital of the province, to join a construction team as a carpenter and worked there for more than ten years. In 1987, after an accident at work in which he somehow damaged his back, he returned to the village and lived with his mother who was suffering serious troubles with her legs and had to lie in bed all the time. Zunxi had been introduced to many local girls while he was working in Xi'an, but he rejected all of them. When Zunxi was working in Xi'an in the late seventies, earning a salary by working in the cities was thought by Zhao villagers to be a highly valued, positive qualification for mate choices. That was why many local girls were introduced, through different matchmakers, to him. Zhao villagers gossiped behind Zunxi, saying that he had wanted a city girl but failed. Nasty comments about his looks (he was very dark) and his *wu's* condition (his mother

was paralysed) were spread among his neighbours. Zhao villagers however seemed to accept the fact that Zunxi would remain single, which means that no matchmaker would be interested in introducing anyone to him any more. This was a rare case, because Zhao villagers were always keen on making matches.[23] Even if Zhao villagers could not find proper candidates for those who were not engaged in the process of marriage, they would always be interested in raising the same question again and again. "Has your son 'talked through' one or not? I can try for you". But Zhao villagers stopped asking Zunxi and his mother about his marriage. Except for those whose wives were dead, Zunxi was the only 'adult' man in the village who had never been engaged in a process of marriage.

Zunxi was partly thought of as an outsider, not only because he himself once worked in Xi'an but also because all his brothers and sisters also worked outside the village. He and his mother lived in the village but they were registered as the non-agricultural residents. They had no land in the village and they purchase their food from the town market. Zunxi was often portrayed by his neighbours or even *zijiawu* brothers as strange or weird. Zunxi had a good knowledge of local tradition and customs of the past, though he did not even finish his elementary school. He was a good speaker of local dialects and a master of manipulating local slang. I met him two months after my arrival in the village. After that, whenever we talked to each other, he always talked to me in the local dialect, let alone when he was talking to his friends and relatives.

Once I went together with Zunxi to the county town and met a young woman there. We invited her to join us for a meal in a town restaurant. While we were enjoying our meal, I suddenly realised that Zunxi had changed his way of talking completely. He was trying to say things in *mandarin!* The young woman, whose family came originally from north-eastern China, spoke quite standard mandarin. More surprisingly, Zunxi was creating a fiction of his life when he introduced himself to the woman and winked his eyes at me. He was telling her that he had already married and his wife and children lived in Xi'an! The young woman decided to visit the village the following day after the meal. In the evening Zunxi came to my room with a serious look on his face and asked me to help him keep his story alive when the woman came to the village. He reiterated the details about his fictitious wife and children to me. He left after I had reassured him that I would keep his story alive. However, from the way that he talked to me, I dared not raise the question of why he had to do so. More astonishingly, the following day, when the woman came, even before she asked anything about Zunxi's life and his family, he started to talk about his non-existent wife and children again, trying hard to convince her of his 'happy marriage'.

Is there a motive behind Zunxi's performance? Moral or ethical concern? Social constraint or personal choice? I seriously doubt whether what Zunxi did can simply be reduced to his personality, for the very idea of personhood itself is already a social construction. What astonished me was the completely different characters that Zunxi was able to manage on different occasions. When talking to his *zijiawu* brothers and relatives, Zunxi appeared to be even more native than anybody else. When other Zhao villagers talked to me, they tried hard sometimes to speak in mandarin, but never Zunxi. Why did Zunxi have to change when encountering somebody from the town? Is this change related to his status of being single? There are several overlapping problems involved in this case. Two of them seem to be significant. One concerns the way a Zhao villager perceives himself in relation to the outside world, for example, the world divided by the division between the urban residence and the rural residence. It is because Zunxi used to live in the cities that he was probably more conscious of how urban people

[23]When I was in the village, I was twice asked whether I would like to 'talk through' a marriage process within the village. Both offers came from people whom I did not know very well. Once when I was chatting with some pupils in the village school, a contracted cleaner for the school, who was more than sixty years old, came to join us. Even before he knew my name - he had probably known from other sources - he started to ask whether I was married. After I said no, he immediately asked whether I would be interested in 'talking through' a match in the village.

may cast discrimination on villagers. This may be one of the reasons for Zunxi to speak mandarin to an outsider. Dialects are always manipulated as a source of social power.

This case also raises the question of the extent to which an individual has to act according to the social 'norms'. Zunxi seemed to have little problem with being single in the village, but, when he encountered an outsider, he felt it difficult to tell the truth about his life. It seems to me that Zunxi has no problem with being single but he does have problems with articulating what his life is about. Social constraints that Zhao villagers hold are not particularly concerned with what an individual may be doing, but rather with how a coherent explanation of what one should do is articulated. This may help explain why Zunxi was trying hard to tell the woman that he had married and led a 'normal' life. In other words, a 'normal life', which means socially accepted, is not what one does but what one says. In everyday practices, individuals can choose different strategies to pursue a better life, but they have to be confined to a coherent interpretation of what one should do. This is why, even though Zunxi was able to lead a single life in the village, he was not - to my mind - able to tell it to an outsider. In other words, being single cannot be justified although it may be accepted.

Let us explore further evidence of how social constraints cast their restrictions on the matter of marriage by looking at another example.

Case 3.5 Wanyou and his married life

Wanyou was fifty nine years old in 1992. His first wife died when he was twenty seven and he lived with his mother in Dawa since then. He had two daughters and a son who died of a heart attack in 1974. Wanyou's son had been married and had two children, a boy and a girl. The boy, who was sixteen in 1991, left the village for his uncle in Daqing in the northeast, and the girl, who was eighteen by then, married Minde from Nanjian. Wanyou's two daughters had married a long time ago and left Dawa. During the period of people's communes in 1960s, Wanyou managed to find another woman from Anhui Province, which was thought of as a poor province with a reputation for frequent famines. As Wanyou said, the Anhui woman kept fighting with his children, so he had to let her marry out to a villager in Houjiahe, a neighbouring village. However, Dawa villagers told me that the reason that the Anhui woman had run away was because Wanyou often beat her.

When I was in the village, Wanyou lived alone with his mother who was more than eighty years old and he had to do everything for both himself and his mother, including the cooking, which was supposed to be done by women. Later on, to my surprise, I found out that Wanyou was actually married at the time I was in the village. Wanyou was not single but he and his wife, Minfang, did not live together. His wife was from Nanjian (the fourth group) in the main village; her ex-husband, who used to be Wanyou's good friend, died in 1986. When Minfang's ex-husband died in 1986, their children were still little. Wanyou was asked by the dying husband to help to look after Minfang's children, according to Wanyou. Wanyou told me that he helped her with agricultural work and Minfang sometimes did washing and sewing for him in return. This co-operation invoked ethical problems. Zhao villagers gossiped about their relationship behind them. It is mainly because Zhao women only do certain things for those who are recognised as family members. As Dawa villagers insisted, how could a woman wash a man's clothes without marriage? Wanyou said to me that, under this circumstance, they thought of getting registered with the local government as a legal couple. Wanyou and Minfang did so in 1990. As to the question why they had not yet moved to live together, Wanyou told me that it was simply because there was still one son of his wife (Minfang) who had not yet engaged in a marriage process. Minfang's son was called Jinwu. Jinwu's mother, that is Wanyou's wife, had to stay in her old home in Nanjian to look after her son. This included everyday cooking and maintenance of their home. Jinwu was twenty-three years old in 1992 and was not able to 'talk through' a marriage process. When talking about his separation from his wife, which certainly caused Wanyou great difficulties in everyday living, Wanyou often demonstrated explicitly his disgust towards Jinwu by saying that Jinwu was stupid and lazy. But the point is that Wanyou

never challenged the idea that, no matter how old a son was, he would have to be looked after by a woman, often his mother. As Wanyou said, "When the boy comes back from the field, he has to have a hot dish. His mother therefore has to stay with him. But he is stupid and may never find a bride. He is too old to find anything now. Nowadays, as early as fifteen or sixteen, boys have already 'talked through' their marriage processes. Jinwu is already twenty-three but still single. What do you say about this? I myself tried to fix him a bride several times, but it never worked." From time to time, Minfang came to Dawa, helping Wanyou with washing and sewing and other house chores. They sometimes also met in Qincheng markets. I asked Wanyou, if his wife could not move away from the main village, why did not he move to live with her in her home? Wanyou bluntly refused the idea, "What can I do about my *yuanzi*? My 'family property' is in Dawa".

There are several points that I would like to make. Firstly, with respect to the problem of remarrying, there seems to be no major obstacle in Zhaojiahe, but few actually do. According to the official criterion, one only needs to register with the local government in order to prove that one is married. However, nobody ever talked about Wanyou's second marriage as a marriage, simply because he did not go through a process of marriage. It was Wanyou himself who told me that he had been married. Zhao villagers seemed to ignore the fact that Wanyou had registered with the local government. This raises the question: what signifies a marriage? The official registration is the only legal verification of one's marriage status, but Zhao villagers do not take it seriously. Zhao villagers take those who have passed the four stages of a marriage process as legitimate couples. Although Wanyou and Minfang claimed that they were a legitimate couple, Zhao villagers still did not view them as a couple because they had not been transformed by the process of marriage.

Secondly, Zhao villagers had paid less attention to the official registration in the past ten years than before. There is an increasing tendency to delay the registration. As the village accountant estimated, the proportion of unregistered marriages could be more than forty per cent in Zhaojiahe in 1992, although many of them may register later on, especially when they encountered other residential problems such as land distribution and property divisions. A random sampling survey, made by myself, of 23 young couples (under the age of thirty five) showed that only a little more than fifty per cent of them, that is 12 of them, had registered with the local authority before their weddings took place. Five of the remaining eleven reported that they had already registered after their weddings.

Wanyou's example also raises a question concerning the nature of family life in the village. There is a very practical reason for marriage, that is, co-operation between a man and a woman in daily life. Minfang could not move to live with Wanyou, not because she did not want to but because she had a son who needed to be looked after. Partly because it was Minfang's responsibility to help her son to find a bride, and partly because a son had to be looked after by his mother (i.e. a man had to be looked after by a woman), Minfang had to stay with her adult son. With respect to the relationship between men and women, male villagers tended to stress the view that a man could not live without a woman but not the other way around, because a man *could not* handle house chores. As Wanyou said, "A man simply cannot live by himself. How can he do these little house chores? I'm an exception because I know how to cook. House chores have to be done by women. Women can live by themselves. They know how to do everything". Zhao

women disagreed with this view and insisted that a woman could not survive without a man because even carrying water home from wells needed men's strength. Although the evidence provided by different parties was different, the way in which their arguments were constructed remained the same: men and women had to live together for practical reasons. This invites the question of how men and women are thought of and talked about as different beings. To put it bluntly, Zhao villagers do not see women and men as different sexes; they see women and men as different social beings who carry out different social functions. Both women and men are seen as different but constituent parts of the peasant household. Following this logic, marriage can only be practical but never be affectional or ideological. Nothing can penetrate the arrangements of marriage unless it is something practical.

Under this circumstance, it may not be surprising to find that there are few cases of divorce in Zhaojiahe, because divorce does not follow, to use Bourdieu's terminology, the 'logic of practice' of the marriage in Zhaojiahe. Zhao villagers would use whatever means possible to try to reconcile a broken marriage, not because they do not want to see broken hearts but because they do not take marriage as an individual matter. Marriage is rather a constituting agency of peasant household production. As a matter of fact, since the early 1980s, there had been only one case of divorce in the village.

Case 3.6 Rongcai's divorce

I was told that the divorce had taken place two or three years ago before I came to the village. Rongcai came from a big close *zijiawu*. Rongcai's father used to be a village doctor and his mother used to be the village party secretary during the period of people's communes. Rongcai had been married for more than five years before his divorce and his wife came from a neighbouring village, Yangjiahe. The couple had two little children.

According to Rongcai's mother, the couple had been really in a very good relationship and it was her daughter-in-law's parents who should be responsible for this divorce, because they wanted to 'sell' their daughter twice in order to make more money for their own family. Encouraged by her parents, as Rongcai's mother said to me, Rongcai's wife started to make family conflicts, arguing and quarrelling with everyone. As Rongcai's mother said, they tried to calm her down but failed. The family conflict developed. Rongcai's wife made an effort to commit a suicide by means of diving into a village well. But Rongcai's mother said, "It was a fake. She did not dive into the well. It must be somebody who helped her to climb down to the bottom of the well. When we dragged her out of the well, her clothes were dry. How could one dive into a well with her clothing dry?"

Some Zhao villagers told different stories. They said that, once when Rongcai's wife was not feeling well, Rongcai's mother criticised her daughter-in-law for being lazy. When Rongcai's wife was seriously ill, Rongcai's mother wondered whether there might have been a unknown ghost clinging to the body of her daughter-in-law. Rongcai's mother decided to invite a *shen-po-zi* (*shen* - god or ghost; *po-zi* - old lady) to help. In general, Zhao villagers thought the invitation of a *shenpozi* was bad since it was superstitious. The *shenpozi* came to Rongcai's home and had a look at Rongcai's wife who was by then lying on the bed, convinced that there was a ghost clinging to her. The *shenpozi* then suggested scaring the ghost away by means of lashing Rongcai's wife with a cane whip. The *shenpozi* said that she was not going to beat the wife but the ghost. It was said that Rongcai's mother believed the *shenpozi* and helped her carrying out the whipping. When recalling this event, some villagers who were close to Rongcai's mother showed their puzzlement. As one villager said, "Rongcai's mother is an extraordinary woman. She is eloquent and used to be the party secretary. But I do not know why she was superstitious this time, inviting a *shenpozi* to beat her daughter-in-law." Those less sympathetic with Rongcai's mother told me that it was because Rongcai's mother decided to whip her daughter-in-law in order to give her a lesson, and that was the reason that the daughter-in-law left the village after having attempted suicide.

Before the formal settlement of divorce was reached, Rongcai's wife, after being beaten, left Zhaojiahe for Yangjiahe, temporarily staying with her parents. A few days after Rongcai's

wife left, Rongcai's mother and father went to Yangjiahe to ask their daughter-in-law to come back to Zhaojiahe. Rongcai's parents were welcomed with fists and feet at Yangjiahe. The face of Rongcai's mother was full of blood when she returned. Rongcai's brother, Wangcai, who was said to be a hothead *(leng-dou-qing)* who dared to beat anyone, saw his mother bleeding and called all of his fifteen close *zijiawu* brothers together. The army of these brothers marched to Yangjiahe the following day and beat Rongcai's wife's whole family. Even so, Rongcai's side refused to consent to a divorce. Rongcai's wife had to appeal to the local court in the Leijiawa township (Xiang).

Officials from the Xiang government came to both villages to investigate the case. Rongcai's mother insisted that, because Rongcai's wife's parents had bribed the relevant officials, they permitted the divorce. To argue with the officials, Wangcai went to the Xiang government with his mother twice and had a fight with the governor of the township. The officials said that Wangcai was desperate and mad because he was even trying to beat the Xiang governor. Wangcai was held in the Xiang government for the offence of interrupting the governor's normal work for two days. However, as Wangcai's family said, they were very successful at avoiding financial losses. Wangcai even persuaded the court to force Rongcai's ex-wife's (by then) parents to pay for medical treatment of the wound on his mother's face.

It was true that Rongcai's ex-wife had been remarried very soon after the divorce, while Rongcai was still alone when I was in the village. Their two children were both living with their father in Zhaojiahe.

It is evident that marriage is still a family matter, particularly a matter for parents. Rongcai himself seemed to play little role in the whole conflict. It is family that goes to protect and argue the best for individuals. It is evident that personal affection is not the reason for marriage. Either fights or quarrels do not necessarily affect the actual relationship if both sides see that their mutual benefits are still tied together. On the other hand, there is no 'fair' judgement in Zhaojiahe. Every villager, when facing a situation, has to take a side even if they are simply recalling an event. Moral constraints are situational in the village.

Discussion

Although several aspects of marriage in Zhaojiahe look quite conventional, as if there is little difference from what has been portrayed as characteristic of 'traditional' Chinese kinship, such as the parental intervention of their children's marriages, we should not forget the historical condition under which Zhao villagers engage in this kind of marriage practice. Earlier, Croll pointed out that the authority of the older generation and the degree to which they continued to exercise control over marriage negotiations in the Maoist era could be related to "a) the structure and function of the household and b) the degree to which households encapsulated by overlapping primary groups" (1981: 184). These two suggestions seem to be particularly applicable to the case of Zhaojiahe. However, my suggestion is that, in order to maintain such control over the young generation, 'the structure and function of the household', or the social and economic conditions of marriage, have to be transformed into individuals' consciousness through social and cultural articulations of what is 'normal' or what is socially acceptable. One should by no means neglect the importance of socio-economic conditions in explaining Zhao villagers' marriage practice, but it may not be justifiable to reduce this practice simply to these conditions. We must realise that there is a mutually constitutive process in which Zhao villagers produce and reproduce the conditions that generate their marriage practice.

Marriage negotiation in Zhaojiahe is a meticulous process. It is a matter of two families but not of individuals. It is parents who talk about and arrange their children's marriages. Marriage has to be negotiated through a matchmaker. It is like a business negotiation between two sides when the discussion of bride-price is concerned. All these characteristics of a Zhao marriage have their practical significance: they demonstrate an overwhelming concern of whom Zhao villagers make allies with. What underlies this concern is, in my view, a changing strategy in everyday temporal-spatial practices, either conscious or unconscious to Zhao villagers themselves. I argue that, in response to the wider socio-economic change, Zhao villagers focus more on space as a source of social power, which re-organises the fields of social relations of the village and gives specific significance to marriage. It is for this reason that Zhao villagers started to practise intra-village marriage in order to expand their social space, because economic co-operation was much more needed than the Maoist past. Ironically, if not too ironically, the expansion of social space resulted in a reduction of scope of marriage networks in a geographic sense. Zhao villagers see this change as a reaction to the requirement of household production - because economic co-operation between households is needed more than before. The logic is: if one is not able to build a connection with a *yuanshang* village, it will be better to build a marriage tie within the village. Other *yuanxia* villages are disfavoured in regard to mate choice.

By looking at the way in which Zhao villagers talk about issues concerning marriage negotiations such as 'age at marriage', I have tried to show that it is necessary to examine the participants' own comments on their practices. In this chapter, I have followed the way in which Zhao villagers talk about, comment upon and represent marriage as a process of establishing social relationships. More expenditure on marriage does not simply show that there is a difficulty in recruiting brides from other villages but, more importantly, shows that social relationships are more explicitly articulated in terms of finance, reciprocity and exchange.

This chapter focuses on the ethnographic present of the early 1990s. I did not particularly trace the changes which may have taken place during the radical years of the Maoist revolution. There is one general observation that I would like to make, in regard to the possible changes in the area of marriage. In the case of Zhaojiahe, I suggest that the Maoist era might have seen a greater degree of equality between male and female in terms of marriage, which may in turn have reduced the degree of consciousness of sexual difference in terms of its social functions. In other words, there is a greater awareness of difference based on gender during the period of the economic reforms and this awareness is in turn defined by the different social roles which are attributed to the two sexes. This change is, either directly or indirectly, derived from the division of labour within the household. But, as a general trend, I shall maintain that the economic reforms have made Zhao villagers more conscious of physical differences between the two sexes and brought about the return of a large amount of the conventional vocabularies of pre-communist practice.

Chapter 4 The World of Mo: The Fields of Social Relations

Introduction

Robin Fox once said, 'kinship is to anthropology what the nude is to art'. The nude is to art what food is to Zhao villagers.[1] Zhao villagers place an overt, explicit, sometimes even - to my mind - almost obsessive emphasis on food as means of social signification. This chapter aims to show the process in which the fields of social relations in the village are signified and constituted in the presentation and representation of food. It is not only social relationships but also the very process in which these relationships are made, created, reiterated, and maintained that is inseparable from the way of preparing, serving, presenting and representing food on various daily occasions. More importantly, to Zhao villagers, presentation and representation of food are the means by which relationships established can be transformed and modified.

In the preparation and presentation of daily meals, a spatial arrangement is exercised within a family *(yao)*. This exercise, in the form of serving and having daily meals, is crucial to an understanding of how sexual divisions of labour in a household are made, and hence indicates a connection between the production of space and that of gender. As I shall argue, a close inspection of the spatial division between the two sexes within a house *(yao)* will help us understand the process of production of 'sexual meanings'.

Furthermore, food and the way in which it is served and presented not only concern about the process of making and re-making of social relations, either within or outside the house *(yao)*, but also serve as a means for Zhao villagers to organise social activities along time. In other words, food and its presentation serve, in a way, as a social calendar by which Zhao villagers are able to tell the rhythm of their social timing. To put it in a simplified way, to Zhao villagers, to know what day it is today means to look at one's own or one's neighbour's dining table.

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Malinowski, a troubled ancestor of anthropology,[2] saw cultural development as a functional response to different biological human needs and food demand as one of the most fundamental human requirements. This claim is true but it cannot explain why there are such diversities in the ways in which different societies produce, prepare, serve, and have different kinds of food, and create different social meanings about food and its presentation in different contexts. Food, taken as an element of Chinese culture, has long been under scrutiny by sinologists (see for instance Andersen 1988; Chang 1977). Some scholars maintain that it is scarcity and shortage of food, as least in the past - a long history of 'undernourishment, drought

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[1]Chang believes that 'at least one of the best ways of getting to a culture's heart would be through its stomach' (1977).

[2]For critical reviews of Malinowski's work and Malinowski as an ethnographer, see for instance Geertz 1976, 1988: 73-101; Clifford 1988: 28-9; Stocking 1983.

and famines', which compelled the Chinese people to 'make judicious use of every possible kind of edible vegetable and insect, as well as offal' (Gernet 1960: 135; cf. Chang 1977: 13). As Anderson pointed out, "Chinese cooking is a cooking of scarcity" (1988: 149). Relying on few resources, Chinese people are able to produce a variety of different dishes. In order to do so, a basic principle of cooking is developed. "At the base of this complex is the division between *fan*, grains and other starch food, and *cai*, vegetable and meat dishes" (Chang 1977: 6). Organised around this division, great variations of food production are possible, *cai* allows Chinese people to enjoy as many different dishes as possible at one meal.

Nonetheless, none of the above characterisation seems to bear any resemblance to what Zhao villagers do in respect to food and its presentation. There might have existed famines and droughts in the past but this area, as Zhao villagers recalled, was often the place to take the refugees of famines from other parts of China. Especially since 1981, after the agricultural responsibility system was installed, many Zhao villagers have managed to save a great deal of grain. Although there is plenty of grain, Zhao villagers do not often prepare a large amount of different dishes for daily occasions. In other words, the division between *fan* and *cai* does not exist on daily occasions. Zhao villagers focus on the steamed bread as the main food. As a social marker, it is only when there are village celebrations such as weddings or funerals that the *fan-cai* principle will govern the dining tables. Unlike what Anderson observed, Zhao villagers do not turn their cooking of scarcity into a variety of cooking but organise their cooking of scarcity and the variety of cooking as demarcation between daily and ceremonial occasions, and therefore a social rhythm can be produced.

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In this chapter, I shall start with an examination of the domination of one type of food, steamed bread *(mo)*, in daily life. Among other types of food, *mo* is the basis of food presentation and representation. And then I shall turn to a discussion of how daily meals are prepared and served. The following section focuses on how food is used as a social calendar to organise social activities. Finally, I shall look briefly at how food can be employed as means of judgement and a form of social criticism.

4.1 'The World of Mo'

Mo, steamed bread, is the dominant type of food in Zhaojiahe in both the nutritious and the social sense.[3] Zhao villagers give an explicit stress to the significance of steamed bread which is made of wheat flour that they grow for themselves. The cultural image of the varieties of food making associated with China (Chang 1977: 6) is by no means an adequate account of how Zhao villagers prepare and have daily meals. Many kinds of food, which are popular in other parts of China, especially in south-eastern China, are never tasted or even heard of by Zhao villagers. A few days after my arrival in Dawa, one of the seven villager groups, while having a chat with my hostess, Yin'ai, I happened to mention the word 'fish

[3]For a general discussion of northern food in China, see Hsu and Hsu 1977; for a comparative perspective of such discussion focusing on southern food, see Anderson and Anderson 1977.

bone' *(yu-ci)*. I did not expect that Yin'ai would stop me and ask: "What did you say"? "Fish bone", I replied. "What is that?" she insisted. Yin'ai, who was about 48 years old in 1992 and had two sons in university, had never tasted a fish. Yin'ai admitted that, in her whole life, she had not yet even seen a fish. In fact, there is a little river (Dayuhe) flowing in front of Dawa and there might be small fish in it, but no Zhao villagers related the river to fish or any other kind of aquatic animals, instead, the river is associated with irrigating water for the wheat fields. Also in the town market, which Zhao villagers often went to visit, there was occasionally fish for sale, but few Zhao villagers remembered that they had ever seen fish at the market.

Human beings not only eat but also eat in certain ways, by which food obtains social and cultural significance. This question of how to eat first of all requires the production of differentiation between different kinds of food: some kinds are made more important than other kinds. To Zhao villagers, fish is of little social significance. Zhao villagers normally have meat only on special occasions, such as the Chinese New Year's celebration, weddings and funerals. Beef is much less popular than pork, though there is no sentimental reason for not having beef.[4] The reason, according to my host, was that beef was far more expensive than pork. Consumption of pork by and large relies upon purchase from the town market. Every family in the village breeds several hens for the purpose of obtaining eggs. Fried eggs are often prepared only for guests.[5]

On daily occasions, Zhao villagers rely on the steamed bread. If there is no guest at the dining table, vegetables would mean luxury to many families. In winter, shepherd's purse in the wheat fields can be picked for free and is often served as a vegetable dish. In summer, prices of vegetables are relatively low, and Zhao villagers may consider buying some from the town market for self consumption. The most common scene for a daily meal, when I was in the village, was that the steamed bread was served together with salt and hot chilli sauce. For everyday consumption, steamed bread is made in a shape like a small half ball. Zhao villagers would put a lot of hot chilli - like a sandwich - in the middle of their bread and eat it with water or, sometimes, millet soup. Other kinds of food are unlikely to be seen on daily dining tables. Dumplings are prepared only for special occasions and noodles are only preferred by a few villagers. As Wanbin, my first host in the village, once said to me, "Our Zhaojiahe is a world of Mo!"

A world of steamed bread is only a world of everyday life. Special occasions are always demarcated by serving and having different kinds of food or, precisely, different kinds of *cai*. The Chinese New Year's celebration, the village festivals, weddings and funerals, and so forth are occasions on which Zhao villagers celebrate and enjoy vegetable, meat and other

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[4]To Taitou villagers, oxen had a strong sentimental value, according to M. C. Yang. Because agricultural work relied upon oxen, Taitou villagers were reluctant to eat beef and disliked butchers who had to kill oxen. As Yang wrote, "The feeling is so strong that he may feel worse about the loss of his ox than he would about the death of his infant child, for the loss of the animal endangers the life of the whole family", 1945: 47.

[5]When I left the village in summer of 1992, many villagers came to my place to say 'good-bye' to me. Most of them brought several boiled eggs with them. I had collected 87 boiled eggs in the end. I almost passed out thinking that I had to consume all of the eggs on the train. The villagers insisted that I should eat all of them on the train back to Beijing. Fortunately, I had finally managed to distribute these eggs to the kids of my neighbours secretly.

dishes. In comparison with daily meals, on ceremonial occasions, Zhao villagers can be described as extravagant. Why is there such a contrast between ordinary days and special occasions? Firstly, as I see it, special occasions are occasions by which social relations are formally represented, produced and reiterated. Secondly, special occasions are social markers by which a social rhythm is produced. In so doing, food is used as a social commentary on different kinds of days.

Food plays an intrinsically important role on the social occasions, not only in the sense that different kinds of food are served but also in the sense that food is used to classify, to distinguish, to produce the fields of social relations. Therefore, the difference between everyday life and special occasions is transformed into, and hence signified by, a difference between thrift and extravagance in terms of preparation and consumption of food. In so doing, Zhao villagers insinuate the social rhythm, which is built through the making of social relationships, into an individual's stomach. Thrift and extravagance are not simply ideas about what to do, they are rather social practices which help Zhao villagers distinguish, classify, maintain, develop their social relationships among their *zijiawu*, relatives and neighbours on appropriate social occasions. In a way, to Zhao villagers, food serves as a social calendar and the stomach regulates social relationships.

4.2 Daily Meals as Temporal-Spatial Practices

In Zhaojiahe, it is customary to eat twice a day, in the morning and the afternoon respectively. Zhao villagers usually do not use any specific term to indicate the first meal, which I shall call it 'breakfast' for convenience; while the second meal is called 'after-noon meal' *(shang-wu-fan)*. Breakfast is served at nine or ten in the morning, while 'after-noon meal' usually at two or three. There are variations from one household to another but, in general, the time to eat is relatively universal in the village. As some villagers recalled, during the period of the people's communes, Zhao villagers used to bring their bowls outside and squatted in front of their courtyard doors, having their 'after-noon meals' together and chatting with each other. It was no longer to be so in the 1980s and the early 1990s, since there was no longer a unified time schedule for Zhao villagers to go to the field after the household production was installed in 1981. Breakfast may be delayed if a morning session of agricultural activities is needed, either in summer or autumn when there are lots of work to do in fields, while in winter, i.e. the agricultural leisure time, it may be served earlier than nine. The similar kind of adjustments may also occur to the 'after-noon meal'. In the evening, Zhao villagers are not supposed to eat anything and they go to sleep early.[6] Yin'ai, my hostess, said to me that she had never felt that she would like to eat anything in the evening. Men sometimes have some steamed bread after dark, especially during the agricultural busy time. This arrangement will be changed only if there are guests visiting the family.

[6]It was rather a disastrous experience for me at the beginning of my fieldwork. I have this memory of wandering around the yard, purely waiting for breakfast to be ready and leaving my diary book open without any energy to write. But I must say that, after a few weeks, I was more or less used to two meals a day and it was a very successful diet.

The daily arrangement of two meals serve two social functions. Firstly, in relation to festivals and ceremonies, the daily arrangement signifies an 'ordinary day', which is made in contrast to a sense of 'extraordinariness' embedded in special social occasions. Zhao villagers see this demarcation between the ordinary and the extraordinary as a necessary condition for them to organise both social and agricultural activities. In order to accommodate significant social events and agricultural activities into one calendar, special social occasions have to be arranged in the agricultural leisure time. The social rhythm is then organised according to three dualistic concepts:

Agriculture:	busy time : leisure time
Social life:	ordinary days : extraordinary days
Food:	daily meals : feasts

Therefore, the logic of Zhao calendar, at least as being put into a systematic analysis, is:

busy : leisure :: ordinary : extraordinary :: daily food : feast[7]

When presenting a calendar like this, we need to remember that there might be different social schedules, for instance, for the different sexes, which I will discuss later.

Secondly, Zhao villagers reckon time in everyday life by way of referring to when daily meals are served. In terms of time reckoning, there is no smaller unit of time than 'day' which is called *ri-zi* in the village. When referring to a particular moment of a day, the two meals serve as crucial points of reference. The two meals cut a day into three parts: *da-zao* (before breakfast), *shang-wu-fan-tou-shang* (before the 'after-noon meal') and *shang-wu-fan-hou-shang* (after the 'after-noon meal'). These three parts of a day have different significances in different periods of a year. For instance, during the agricultural leisure time, Zhao villagers usually work only one session between two meals, and they would spend the rest of the day smoking and gossiping. While, during the busy time, there will be three sessions of agricultural work each day. Each day during the different periods of a year has a different intensity and duration which are measured by its social or agricultural significance.[8]

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Social action that takes up time also moves through space.[9] For instance, how do women and men occupy different space when an ordinary meal is served? Does the spatial division between the two sexes change according to the different periods of a year? These questions are concerned less with what to eat but more with how to eat. It is the way in which daily meals are served that tells how different spatial strategies are employed on daily occasions.

In Zhaojiahe, the father, his adult sons, as well as the grandfather if there is one, of a family are supposed to sit down to have their meals around a table - often a short-legged square

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[7]See also Table 5, as well as the discussion of this matter in the beginning of the following chapter.
[8]As Evans-Pritchard showed (1940), Nuer's time is 'relational'. It is the relations between events (in relation to oxen) that are counted as 'time' which, unlike that to Europeans, does not own the physical quality of linearity measured in minutes or hours.
[9]For a diagrammatic representation of daily time-space paths, see for instance Harvey 1990: 211-212.

table.[10] Women, standing close to the cauldron, are supposed to use the bed or other space, which men do not occupy, as their dining space. On daily occasions, men and women do not eat together. Zhao villagers provide two reasons for this arrangement. One is that women need to be close to the cauldron in order to serve, and the other is that women need to keep the little children, who are supposed to stay with their mother or grandmother while eating, away from the dinning table in order to let men eat without interference. It is true that, while eating, Zhao men sit down for the whole meal while women are moving around either to serve men or to look after children. After a man, no matter whether he is the father or the son, sits down at the dining table, he will not move till he finishes his meal. It is either the wife or the daughter-in-law of the family who has to add more soup or other kinds of food for their men. Whoever she is, the woman, who is supposed to refill men's bowls, stands next to the cauldron, often holding her bowl, eating on the alert. Often, steamed bread and soup are not brought to the table but kept in the cauldron for the whole meal in order to keep the food warm. While eating, a woman is also watching. A woman should not wait until a man finishes his bowl completely, instead, the woman should suggest to add more for a man at the very moment when he is nearly finishing. The timing of adding more food is crucial: it has to be just before a man finishes his bowl. If a woman forgets to do so - which seldom happens to the wife and sometimes happens to a less careful daughter-in-law - the man who has finished his bowl will not say anything but another man, usually the head of the family, will remind the careless daughter-in-law in a very subtle way, often simply nodding his head without saying anything. A trivial gesture will bring immediate action. Apart from looking at men's bowls, Zhao women also have to look after their children who are often kept on the bed while eating. To put it ironically, it seems that, on daily occasions, Zhao women eat not with their mouths but with their eyes.

This observation suggests that there exists a spatial division between the two sexes within a house *(yao)*, which, in my view, accounts for the sexual meanings and production of gender in Zhaojiahe. I argue that, to Zhao villagers, gender largely relies on how men and women make uses of and identify with certain spaces both within and outside the household. Although, during the radical years of the Maoist revolution, the spatial division between the two sexes outside the household was largely affected and transformed by the series of re-arrangements under the name of liberation and revolution, the strategies of everyday spatial practices within the household remained untouched.[11] My point is that it is these specific everyday spatial practices that allow Zhao villagers to resist ideological revolutions and to maintain their own order of gender cosmology.

On daily occasions, men and women use different spaces within a house *(yao)*. Men, after finishing their meals at the short-legged table, move to the table beside the door, to smoke or drink tea. Women either stay on bed or stand next to the cauldron which is built in connection with the bed. When there are guests visiting the family, the guests would be invited to sit at the main table. Female guests are always invited to sit on the bed. In Zhaojiahe, the

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[10]For a discussion of the interior arrangement of a *yao*, see Chapter 2.

[11]For discussions about whether the communist revolution is a liberation of women, see for instance M. Wolf 1985; Stacey 1983.

bed can be arranged either to the left or to the right hand of the door but, on the opposite side of the bed, there are always two tables. Therefore, the table and the bed as an opposition signify the relation between men and women in the house *(yao)*. Therefore, we have

table : bed :: men : women

The implication is that, to Zhao villagers, what makes a woman is not what she is (in a biological sense) but rather what she does (in a sociological sense). This further indicates that Zhao villagers take the difference between the two sexes as a social practice rather than a biological difference, as something exercised rather than given. Women and men are differentiated by way of engaging in different kinds of work, by way of exercising their different roles on daily occasions, by way of occupying different places within the house. To Zhao villagers, to serve and have daily meals is also a *social* action that reiterates the sexual division of labour and the exercise of gender. To be a woman means to learn how to cook, how to serve daily meals, how to watch men's bowls, how to look after children, how to spin, how to weave, in short, *how to use the bed.*

4.3 The Mode of Production of Steamed Bread

Zhao women prepare and make steamed bread *(mo)* for both daily and ceremonial occasions. On weddings and funerals, as well as other occasions on which feasts or banquets are served, men will cook vegetable and meat dishes, leaving women to prepare steamed bread. Zhao women make different kinds of steamed bread for different social occasions but the way in which steamed bread is made remains the same. There are three major steps in making steamed bread. The leavened dough, made of wheat flour which is both grown and processed in the village, needs to be prepared two or three days in advance. It is said that the process of preparation of the dough is difficult since it demands lots of experience. According to Zhao villagers, one can always make it but to make it nice and tasty is difficult. Young girls of fifteen or sixteen years old will start to learn how to prepare the dough from their mothers at home - no matter whether they have left school or not. The second step is to make the leavened dough into different shapes of bread for steaming. Different shapes of steamed bread should be made for different social occasions. The last step is to steam. Several layers of bamboo-made steamers will be put on the top of the cauldron for steaming.

Steamed bread is not supposed to be made every day but every few days. In summer, since it cannot be stored for long, Zhao women make steamed bread every two or three days; while in winter it is usually made every seven or ten days. During the Chinese New Year, Zhao women will prepare steamed bread for two weeks. Steamed bread will be, after being cooked, preserved within their *yao*, usually in small jars, and will be steamed again before being served at the dining table.

If necessary, two hundred pieces of steamed bread can be steamed at one time, which means to use more than 30 *jin* of flour. As I was told, some villagers had even bigger cauldrons

capable of producing more than three hundred pieces of steamed bread at one time, which is an amount of bread that can be used to serve ten adult men for four or five days. The cauldron is fixed on the brick oven which is connected with the bed. Cooking can at the same time provide heating for the bed.

Apart from steaming, all other preparations take place on the bed. Zhao women sit on the bed, preparing and making the dough. In general, the steamed bread produced for ceremonial occasions is called *hua-mo*, which can be literally translated as 'flowery steamed bread'. *Huamo* are colourful and beautiful; some edible colours are added into the dough. There are four basic types of *huamo*, which are all imitations of little animals: bat, cat, pigeon and *hundun*. *Hundun* was never clearly defined by Zhao women. Some said that it was something which had not yet produced a shape.[12] Others refuted this view but failed to give any other possible explanation. After completion, especially before steaming, these small animals of *huamo* look startlingly beautiful and eye-catching. They are vivid in colour and imaginative in shape. However, the way in which they are made remains rather simple. Basically, Zhao women use scissors - which they also use to cut cloth or to do other things - to cut the imitated feathers, mouths, hands and feet of these little 'animals'. There is no particularly designed cooking instrument for making *huamo*, though it is a piece of daily work that women always do. For instance, a thimble, which is also needed for sewing, is often used for pressing the shape of eyes or mouths of these 'animals'. A small piece of sharp object, whatever it is, for instance, a piece of a broken knife, is usually used to cut their imagined legs or wings.

Every female learns how to make *huamo*. It is a compliment for a housewife to be told that she is good at making *huamo*. Although there is no particular cooking instrument designed for making *huamo*, the techniques involved are quite complicated. Zhao women would apply both their hands and sometimes even their mouth to produce the effect of *huamo* looking like little animals. As I observed in several different households during the period of the Chinese New Year of 1992, there was no schematic pattern that Zhao women would follow when making *huamo*. For instance, I watched Yin'ai, my hostess, making *huamo* before the New Year's Day. She made about twenty - which she called - 'cats', but not only did none of them look exactly alike but also the way she made them was not similar. She seemed to change her pattern of making constantly. She could start from every possible part of the 'cat', either making its eyes first or carving its feet first, and move to work on any part she liked.

From a technical perspective, production of *huamo* is not meant to duplicate, it is not meant to produce exactly the same product each time. Every single piece of *huamo* should be different from another. Like artists, Zhao women are creative rather than productive - in the economist's sense of this term. It is craftsmanship that captures the spirit of the mode of production of steamed bread. Tools are not specially designed for the efficiency of production but rather adopted for the sake of convenience. *Huamo* are not conceived by Zhao villagers as

[12]If understood in this way, this word in Chinese folklore refers to the 'primeval state of the universe', in which the earth was not yet separated from the heaven. It is different from the term *hunton*, a kind of food, usually served with soup.

being made by a special technique but by a special group of persons. At the core of this mode of production of steamed bread is the production of Zhao women.

In the following chapter, we shall see that there is a similar pattern that can be detected from the way in which Zhao villagers carry out their agricultural work. Although there are spatial divisions of gender, both agricultural and domestic work are done in the same way. That is, craftsmanship is the mode of village production.

4.4 A Calendar of Food

In contrast, food and its presentation are different on social occasions such as festivals and ceremonies. Firstly, varieties of different meat and vegetable dishes will be served on these occasions (see Chapter 6). Secondly, a particular kind of *huamo* is supposed to be prepared for a particular kind of social events. Thirdly, on some social occasions, other types of food such as dumplings may replace steamed bread or *huamo* as means of social signification. Fourthly, the way in which food is served on ceremonial occasions is different from the daily arrangement (see Chapter 6).

Below, I shall outline significant social occasions (see Table 5) and the associated types of *huamo* or other types of food.

Huamo for different social occasions

1) The Chinese New Year

The New Year period covers almost a month including the last fifteen days of the previous year and the first fifteen days of the new year. As in other parts of China, it is the most important festival of a year. In the last month of the previous year, Zhao women start to prepare *huamo*. They will produce a large amount of *huamo* which are not only supposed to be consumed by themselves but also prepared for exchange with their relatives. During this period, for Zhao villagers, one of the main tasks is to visit relatives in the neighbouring villages. Whenever visiting a relative during this period, *huamo* needs to be exchanged. There is no particular name for *huamo* prepared for the New Year period and these *huamo* are made in the shape of four basic kinds of animals, as discussed earlier. Not only are *huamo* required for the New Year period, but the best flour will also be used for making them. During this period, one would expect a spectacular scene in the village - Zhao villagers would dress up and travel to visit their relatives with hanging baskets of 'flowery steamed bread' on the back of their bicycles.

2) Weddings

Those who are invited for the wedding feast have to bring gifts. It depends on the relationship one has with the family whose son is going to marry. For a far *zijiawu* brother, to bring a pair of *huamo* of a special kind is sufficient. *Huamo* for weddings is called *Lao-hu-mo* (literally, 'tiger bread') which is the most flowery and complicated kind of steamed bread. *Laohumo* look unbelievably colourful with various kinds of imaginative decorations, and are

often made of an exaggerated imitation of a tiger's head, which in many cases cannot be identified as a tiger but rather looks like a huge, raging monster. An ordinary *laohumo* is as big as a PC computer (not the portable type), using more than three or four *jin* flour. The tiger's eyes, which are often made of eggs dyed black, are particularly poignant - huge and lively. The tiger's mouth and nose are distinctively coloured in order to catch people's eyes. Sometimes, an egg is put in the mouth of the 'tiger' as its teeth. More astonishingly, the 'tiger' is often given a pair of tremendous, vicious horns with, most commonly, a mixture of green and red colour, though these horns sometimes make the tiger look like an enlarged cricket. The 'tiger' does not have a chest but usually does have a pair of short, crippled legs. Combination of colours is always brilliantly eye-catching. On the top of the head of the 'tiger', colours are supposed to be concentrated.

3) Funerals

There is no particular name for *huamo* which is prepared for or presented at funerals. The funeral *huamo* is supposed to be huge and looks like a huge piece of round bread. The shape of funeral *huamo* is - in comparison with *laohumo* - plain. Paper flowers are supposed to be stuck on the top of the funeral *huamo*. In terms of uses of colour, there is no difference between *laohumo* and the funeral *huamo*. When attending a funeral, Zhao villagers will bring, together with other kinds of gifts, the funeral *huamo*.

4) Birth

Within the first three days after a woman gives birth to a new baby, her relatives are not allowed to visit her. Three days after the birth, the relatives - those from the woman's natal family - will visit her with a special kind of bread which is called *ganmo*. *Ganmo* is the only type of bread which is not made by means of steaming. Instead, it is made by baking the dough on crushed burning small stones. *Ganmo* is thin and crispy, which is thought to be good for digestion by Zhao villagers. There is no artificial colour that is added to *ganmo*. In contrast to that of weddings and funerals, presentation of *ganmo* is very informal. The woman who receives *ganmo* will distribute it to children around her.

5) *Jianjianmo* for the new-born babies

On the fifteenth of the first month of the Chinese lunar year, the new born babies, those under three, will receive *jianjianmo* from the neighbours. This is one of the few occasions that Zhao villagers refer to neighbourhood. This sense of neighbourhood indicates a residential circle of daily interaction and economic co-operation, which is often defined by the boundaries created by the production teams during the period of people's communes. The shape of *jianjianmo* is often made in the four basic types of *huamo* which I discussed earlier. Presentation of *jianjianmo* is informal and is often done by kids on the behalf of their parents.

On the occasion of a new birth, *ganmo* is prepared for the wife and presented by the wife's natal family to help her digest, while *jianjianmo* is prepared for the child and presented by the husband's neighbours.

6) Mangqian and Mangpa[13]

Mangqian (literally, 'before getting busy') and Mangpa (literally, 'after being busy') are not holidays in a strict sense but, rather, indicate two significant periods before and after the summer harvest which is about the early June. The summer harvest is the busiest period of a year in agriculture and is also the most important time of a year, since, to Zhao villagers, their next year's life largely depends upon the winter wheat production. Zhao villagers eat and sleep in the wheat field when reaping and husking. Food will be brought to the field. The harvest lasts about ten days. Either before or after the harvest, mothers are supposed to visit their married-out daughters with *huamo* and vice versa. According to Zhao villagers, on these two occasions both the old flour from the previous year and the new flour from the harvest year should be shared among relatives, particularly between mothers and daughters. There is a practical reason for this arrangement. If to consider the fact that all Zhao villagers may start to reap their wheat at relatively the same time, they would have to seek help, if needed, from their relatives, who live in other villages where reaping may be slightly later or earlier.

7) The village market days *(hui)*

On the village market days, Zhao villagers will visit their relatives in other villages when attending markets there. When they visit relatives, Zhao villagers always bring some steamed bread, no matter whether they have a meal with their relatives or not. The steamed bread for these market days is often not different from what Zhao villagers daily consume, though it may be slightly bigger.

Uses of other types of food

Except for steamed bread, there are also other types of food required to be prepared and presented for certain social occasions, which lists as follows (see Table 5).

Powu (the fifth of the first month of the lunar year): dumplings *(jiao-zi)* are supposed to be eaten;
Shiwu (the fifteenth of the first month): dumplings are supposed to be eaten;
Duanwu (the fifth of the fifth month): *zongzi*[14] is supposed to be eaten;
The first of the tenth month: *hunton* [15] is supposed to be eaten;
Dongzhi (the twenty second section): dumplings are supposed to be eaten;
The fifth of the twelfth month: a special kind of soup made of five kinds of beans is supposed to be eaten;
Laba (the eighth of the twelfth month): noodles are supposed to be eaten.

To Zhao villagers, to talk about a special day means to talk about what they will eat on that day. As we can see, among other types of food, the dumpling is probably the most important marker for social events. It is also common for Zhao villagers to have dumplings at the New Year's Eve and New Year's Day. Among all types of special food, it is only *zongzi* that

[13]According to *pu-tong-hua* pronunciation, it should be spelled 'Mangba'.
[14]A pyramid-shaped dumpling made of glutinous rice wrapped in bamboo or reed leaves.
[15]A kind of dumpling-like food served with soup.

is not made of wheat but of glutinous rice. Zhao villagers do not make *zongzi* themselves but purchase it from the travelling traders who come to the village.

Differences between *huamo* and other types of food as social signifiers

There are several differences between the uses of *huamo* and other types of food as social signifiers. The most important difference is that, although both *huamo* and other types of food are used as a social calendar, they have different functions in respect to classification of social relations. *Huamo* is the food which travels between different households as the means of creating, reiterating, representing relationships among *zijiawu*, relatives, and neighbours. It is meant to be exchanged. In other words, the uses of *huamo* are reciprocal in essence, though this reciprocity does not have to be immediate and direct. In particular, among *zijiawu* brothers or neighbours, the exchange, for instance, of *jianjianmo* or *laohuimo*, is rather indirect. But, in the long run, the steamed bread one presents to others will be presented to oneself in a similar way. It is reciprocal. On the other hand, among relatives, the exchange of steamed bread is often direct and immediate. Either on the occasions such as Mangqian or Mangpa or on the village market days, relatives exchange exactly the same amount of steamed bread with each other. In contrast, the other types of food are supposed to be *shared* among family members. The uses of other kinds of food such as dumplings and noodles are confined to one's own family members, either living or dead. Unlike other types of food, *huamo* assumes a particular significance in maintaining the networks of social relationships by way of exchange. Whenever a relationship needs to be established or reiterated, presentation of the steamed bread is involved.

Another difference between the uses of *huamo* and other types of food is that the steamed bread is taken as being related to human growth, of which there are three significant markers that Zhao villagers recognise: birth, marriage and death. In other words, a life circle is clearly present in the presentation and representation of the steamed bread. This does not occur in the uses of other types of food.

4.5 Host, Guest and Criticism

When visiting relatives, instead of saying 'to visit a relative', Zhao villagers would say 'to send some steamed bread to a relative' *(song dian mo)*. For instance, a mother would say, *gai gei nu song dian mo le* (literally, 'ought to send some steamed bread to my daughter'). This way of relating steamed bread to relatives may occur on various social occasions. For instance, Zhao parents would often recall the time when their daughters visited them by saying that 'our daughters had brought us steamed bread just before New Year's day'. Old women, when speaking with pride of their daughters, often say: "My daughter brought me some wonderful *huamo* last year".

There are often different ways of talking about different social events by means of employing different food metaphors. For instance, although weddings and funerals are formally referred to as *'guo-shi'* (literally, 'to pass a thing'), Zhao villagers also use the informal expression *chi-xi* (literally, 'to eat the feast') to indicate either a wedding or a

funeral.[16] When there is a wedding in a nearby village, Zhao villagers will ask each other by saying 'are you going to eat the feast?' or 'did you eat the feast?' The implication is that not only social relationships but also social actions are communicated by way of employing food metaphors.

When I was in the village, I was told several times by different villagers about the importance of preparing the necessary cooking facilities for their married sons. As Zhao villagers insist, one does not have to prepare one's son a new courtyard *(yuanzi)* if one cannot afford to, but one has - at the minimum - to build the son an oven and a cauldron and prepare a set of necessary cooking utensils. When talking about family division, Zhao villagers agree that the token for the completion of parental responsibility would be that all sons concerned have got their cooking utensils and cauldron.

* * *

The significance given to food makes food a source of moral judgement and a form of social criticism. In the village, to comment upon other people often means to talk about how and how much they eat. Another division that underlies the making of social relationships is that between host and guest. Either as a host or a guest, the proper behaviour at dining tables is the most important.

In Zhaojiahe, a guest will be invited to sit down first. If there is more than one guest, the most senior guest should be given the 'primary seat' *(zhu-wei)*, though which seat is the primary one may differ from one house to another. Some Zhao villagers referred to the direction to define the primary seat, while others said it would depend on how a house *(yao)* was built. In general, the seats facing the door are often taken as more 'primary' than others and hence kept for the guest. The logic of this arrangement depends on another spatial division: the inside versus the outside. A *yao* is divided into three parts (see Figure 3) - the outside one third, the middle inside one third, and the inner inside one third which is demarcated either by a curtain or a wall from the other two parts. The daily dining space is the middle inside one third, where a short-legged table is placed. The outside one third is a space left for acquaintances, neighbours and insignificant guests. When there are important guests, the guests will be invited to move inside and to share the dining table with the host.[17] By allowing the guest to occupy the seat facing the door, which is usually the seat that the family head takes, the host reverses the spatial arrangement - by placing the guest in a position that usually belongs to the host. However, no guest is allowed to enter the inner inside one third of the house.

In relation to food and the entertainment of the guest, we can introduce another spatial division:

host : guest :: inside : outside

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[16]To Zhao villagers, weddings and funerals are the same in nature, see my discussion in Chapter 6.
[17]No matter what time of the day an important guest arrives, he or she will always be entertained by a meal.

This order can be reversed only when the guest is seen as important, for instance, one's daughter's father-in-law at a funeral feast.

When a guest is present, food has to be different from its everyday form. At least four dishes have to appear on the table, otherwise the host would probably feel embarrassed. The quantity rather than quality is crucial. The quality is dependent upon who the guest is but the quantity of dishes is determined by the very fact that there is a guest present. To entertain a neighbour, four dishes could consist of one plate of salt, one plate of hot pepper, one plate of shepherd's purse, and one plate - particularly prepared for the guest - of Chinese cabbage. Even so, four plates have to be displayed nicely. To entertain an important guest, there could be more than four dishes, and egg, meat and vegetable dishes will be accompanied by wines or spirits. Nonetheless, the point is, even to treat a powerless, poor neighbour requires a certain kind of formality. To Zhao villagers, to entertain a guest is serious business.

Guests, or rather the entertainment of guests, produce a lasting, enjoyable topic of gossips in the village. Zhao villagers talk about, comment upon, judge and criticise others by way of referring to their table manners. If Zhao villagers dislike a person, they will attack his table manners, or pass around gossip about how this person eats other people's bread as if it is free. Zhao villagers would criticise someone by saying that this person did not even know how to eat properly or was too greedy. One of the most common forms of criticisms towards a guest is that he has eaten too much. As a guest, he or she is supposed to eat less than he or she usually does and quicker than his or her host. Consequently, Zhao villagers as guests are very careful about the amount of food they have at other people's dining tables.[18]

Discussion

This is a chapter that summarises the previous discussions of the fields of social relations (kinship and marriage in specific) and provides clues for discussions in the following chapters. In this chapter, I have outlined how the fields of social relations are signified by cultural means. I have also tried to sketch out an analytical framework for the analysis of these fields in the village. Two cultural means underlie the formation of the fields of social relations. One is food and its presentation, and the other is the organisation of familial space. One of the arguments that I shall carry through the whole thesis is that, in order to understand the significance of social change and transformation in rural China, it is necessary for us to examine very carefully the changes in everyday spatial-temporal practices, which - in the case of Zhaojiahe - are organised around the presentation and representation of food.

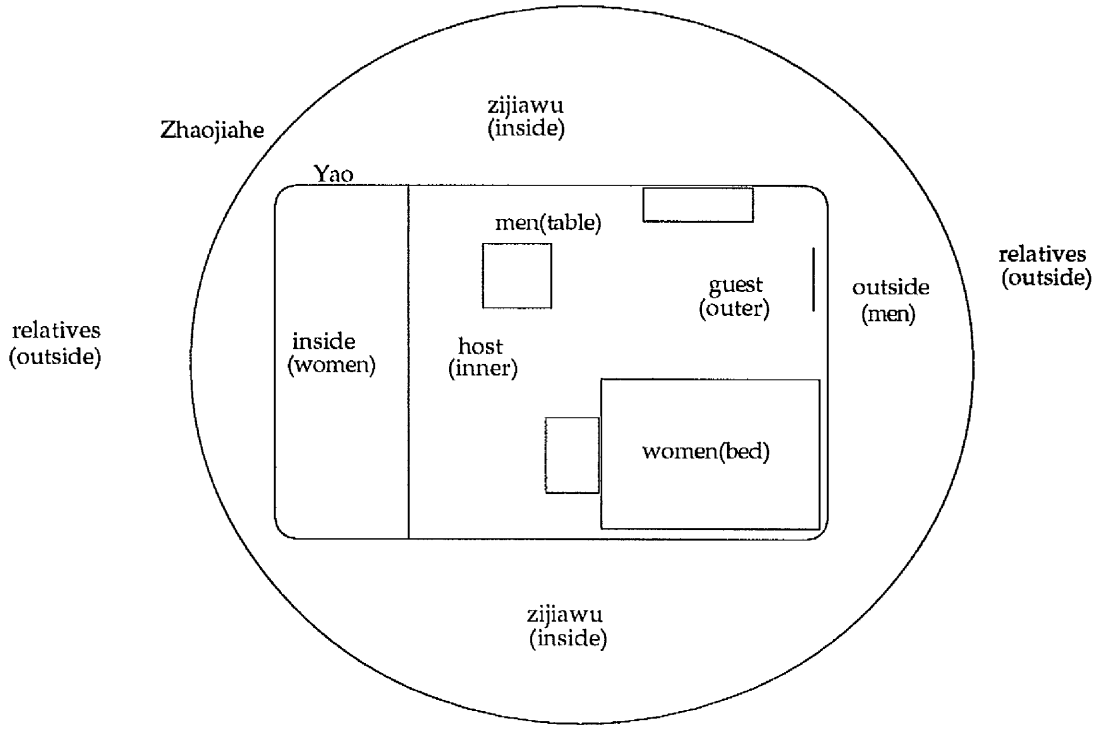
Space and time are two related basic social categories. In Zhaojiahe, food also serves as a calendar by which social events are organised and signified. All significant moments of social life are associated with a special kind of food. Different kinds of food are used to mark extraordinary occasions from ordinary days. Everyday life is signified by repetitive and simple food - steamed bread wrapped with chilli - on the one hand; while on the other ceremonial

[18]For further discussions and examples of Zhao villagers as guests and hosts, see Chapter 6 and 7.

occasions are identified by feasts and the presentation of *huamo*. The rhythm of social life in the village is organised around the dining table and stomach. Daily meals are also used as points of reference to reckon time, since there are no smaller units of time - such as hours or minutes - which are practically meaningful.[19]

The following figure provides a sketch of the fields of social relations and their characteristics.

Figure 5. The Fields of Social Relations



There are several overlapping dimensions in the fields of social relations in the village, which can be summarised as follows:

Reciprocal relationship	pattern	food signifier
among zijiawu brothers	indirect exchange	huamo
zijiawu/relatives	direct exchange	huamo/steamed bread
mother/daughter	direct exchange	steamed bread

Non-reciprocal relationship	pattern	space signifier
husband/wife	inside/inside	table/bed
host/guest	inside/outside	inner/outer space

Social relationships are divided into two basic categories: reciprocal and non-reciprocal. Reciprocal relationships are signified by exchange, either direct or indirect, of steamed bread/huamo. Non-reciprocal relationships are signified by spatial divisions, either

[19]Gurvitch (1964) provided an interesting typology of social times, such as enduring time (ecological), deceptive time (organised society), cyclical time (mystical unions) and so on, but I agree with Harvey's critique: "time and space (or language, for that matter) cannot be understood independently of social action", see Harvey 1990: 223-225.

actual or metaphorical. Food is not supposed to be exchanged either between men and women within a *yao*, or between host and guest. Rather, food is shared between husband and wife or between host and guest. These relations defined within a *yao* are not alterable. On the other hand, relationships outside a *yao* are in nature reciprocal and are signified by exchange of steamed bread.

It is important to notice that these relationships are not defined by a single criterion but rather in relation to one another under different circumstances. The categories of social relations are defined by spatial divisions either within or outside the house. These spatial divisions are in turn maintained by either preparation or presentation of food. Social categories such as men and women, hosts and guests, *zijiawu* and relatives are produced and reproduced in everyday spatial-temporal practices of food presentation and representation. In so doing, the attitude towards food is made a source of social criticism. In other words, food not only signifies but also produces social relationships.

Table 5. The Calendars of Social and Agricultural Activities

Agriculture			TSC	WSC	TLC	Social Activities
Others	Cotton	Wheat	Date (the changing time)	(Feb. 1992 - Jan. 1993)	(the solar equevalents)	
corn, sweet potatoes, hot peper water-melon, soybeans	cultivation	* * * * * * * * weeding	*Lichun:* 4/2(21:54) *Yushui:* 19/2(17:47) *Jingze:* 5/3(16:04) *Chunfen:* 20/3(16:59)	Febrary (0.4C°, Dry) March (6.9C°, Windy)	I(4/2-3/3) II(4/3-2/4)	The first - Chinese New Year's Day: memorial activities concerning ancestors; visiting neighbours; the *wu* feast. The second to the fifth: visiting relatives and entertaining guests. The fifth - Powu: having dumplings. The fifteenth - Shiwu.
sowing	sowing * *	* * *	*Qingming:* 4/4(21:07) *Guyu:* 20/4(4:18)	April (13.2C°, Windy and Sunny)	III(3/4-2/5)	The first - the village bazaar ('Zhaojiahe Hui'): visiting relatives and going to the Hui. Qingming: memorial activities concerning ancestors. A series of village 'Hui' in the neighbouring villages.
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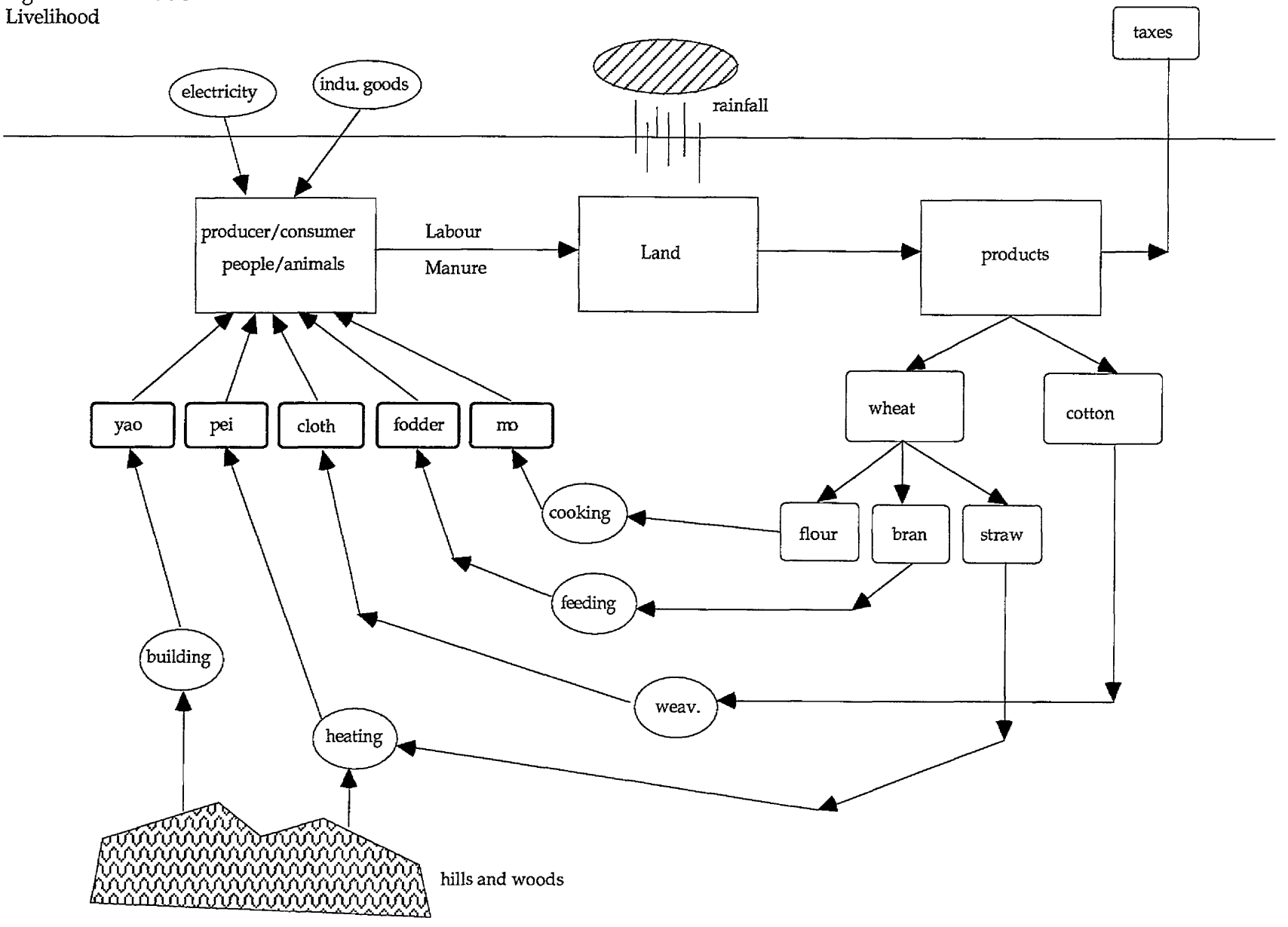
Figure 6. The Circle of Livelihood



Chapter 5 Daily Practices

Introduction

In the previous chapters, I have discussed kinship organisation, marriage practice, and the way in which social relationships are signified and reiterated by means of presentation of food. The question of how people are related is a central concern to Zhao villagers, who see human relations as social actions which are produced and reproduced in practice. Zhao villagers do not see *zijiawu*, relatives, or neighbours as unalterable or unchanging categories which are supposed to be given or made; they do not see the village, the community, the society as static entities. Rather, Zhao villagers see social relationships as interrelated, modifiable, changing enterprises; they see themselves as being capable of transforming these relationships. In this chapter, I shall examine in detail how social relationships are established, maintained and modified in everyday practices, and how Zhao villagers themselves are made and transformed by engaging in these practices.

I shall focus upon several significant themes of daily practices in the village. When providing a detailed account of the daily practices in which Zhao villagers engage, I shall not try to hide the position from which I describe life in the village. It is not only because, as I have discussed earlier, the alleged modern, scientific authenticity of ethnographic representation has been seriously challenged in the past two decades (see the Introduction), but also because, as a native Chinese, I see my own experience of participation constituting part of the subject of the study. I was brought up in north China but had never been to a village for more than a couple of days before my fieldwork in Zhaojiahe in 1991-1992. My account of the daily practices that Zhao villagers carry out is not simply of what they said or did to each other but also about how I understood and felt at that moment and how one event was related to another.

Community studies about rural China have a long history and include many lengthy, detailed, exciting ethnographies about Chinese villages such as Fei's Kaixiangong, Yang's Taitou, Chan's (et al.) Chen village, Potter and Potter's Zengbu and so forth. Since the late 1970s, there has been a growing interest in such studies. However, in my view, these researches, although describing daily life in detail, have often neglected the theoretical significance of 'everyday practices'. They often focus on the consequences or effects of either structural or institutional changes introduced by the state. Unlike these accounts, what I try to show in this thesis is to describe how structural or institutional changes are accommodated in the everyday practices. My materials suggest that either social relationships or institutions are modifiable enterprises in rural China and should be understood as complex practices.

* * *

My main concern in this chapter is to describe a set of practices that are central to the life of Zhao villagers in the early 1990s. I am not concerned with social relationships as networks but

with the way in which Zhao villagers are constituted as a particular kind of 'subjects'.[1] "There are two meanings of the word *subject:* subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to" (Foucault 1982: 212). I use this word 'subject' to mean that Zhao villagers are tied to their identities by a specific set of practices, of which interpretations and explanations - partly as self-knowledge - may not always be articulable (Taylor 1993). A few points derived from Foucault's work - with its focus on subjectivity in and through relations of power/knowledge - are relevant to the task of this chapter. The relevance is the way in which Foucault sees a 'subject' as being made, both historically and culturally, and his way of seeing power/knowledge as a process of intergrowth. Foucault's idea of power helps us articulate the process in which 'subjects' are constituted. Foucault is opposed to a juridical, repressive notion of power and sees power as productive and generative, for 'subjects' are constituted in and through power relations.

> The individual is not a pre-given entity which is seized on by the exercise of power. The individual, with its identity and characteristics, is the product of a relation of power exercised over bodies, multiplicities, movements, desires, forces (Foucault 1980: 73-4; quoted in Monteiro and Jayasankar 1994: 163).

In my view, it is very important to see the 'identities' and 'characteristics' of a particular group of people not as given but rather as made through exercise of power. This chapter aims to examine how Zhao villagers carry out the everyday practices which, in turn, produce and reproduce the 'identities' or characteristics of a particular group of Chinese peasants.

Foucault also takes power relations as generated from various sources. Using Foucault's notion of power/knowledge, Monteiro and Jayasankar provide a good example of how even simple daily practices such as television viewing involve complex workings of power relations. By examining the role of television within a household and the emergence of the 'spectator-Indian' in the context of social change, Monteiro and Jayasankar write: "Foucault conceives of power not as originating from a unified monolithic source, but as a 'complex strategical situation' (Foucault 1984: 93) in any society, actualised from numerous sites, implicit in all relationships, economic, epistemological and sexual. It is generated at the level of the smaller orders of the hierarchy, e.g., the familial, the communal. The larger orders of power such as the state are the effect of the configurations of these local orders. The relations of power are marked by resistance, for these relations stay in an eternally unstable equilibrium. The channels of resistance are also multiple, never extraneous to the forms of power exercised" (1994: 163-164).

There are two relevant points which Monteiro and Jayasankar make explicit. First, power is a *relation* which is pervasive and located in 'complex strategical situations'. Second, both exercise of and resistance to power are actualised from numerous sites and involved various kinds of elements, economic, epistemological, cultural and so forth. However, it is worth noting that direct borrowings from Foucault's work, such as his notion of power, are not unproblematic, because the socio-economic, cultural and political context in rural Shaanxi is entirely different

[1] For a brief discussion of the notion 'subject' in relation to 'agent', see the Introduction, Section 4.

from that of the western societies on which Foucault's work is based. Using China as an ethnographic example, Sangren (1995), among others, challenges the all-encompassing notion of power and criticises Foucault's approach for its lack of consideration of the ideological formations of different types of 'subjects'.

It may not be even adequate to speak about the notion of 'subject'[2] in the context of rural China; it may be more appropriate to talk about the notion 'person' *(ren)*, which has been a focus of discussion in traditional Chinese philosophy which is largely influenced by Confucianism.[3] My aim is to describe a set of practices that help us understand what it meant to be a 'person' in Zhaojiahe in the early 1990s. These practices are what Zhao villagers consider as important and essential to their social life and the formation of social 'norms'. I use the term 'norm' to indicate the manner in which Zhao villagers choose to act in socially acceptable ways.

A crucial characteristic of complying with social norms in the village is to act differently towards different people. For instance, one should provide different treatment to different guests. The core of everyday practices in the village is concerned with socially recognised ways of differentiating people according to different situations. These 'differentiating practices' are crucial for both the social life in Zhaojiahe and an understanding of the 'logic of practice' in the village. Foucault talks about "dividing practices' among 'three modes of objectification which transform human beings into subject". "The subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others. This process objectivizes him. Examples are the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy, the criminals and the 'good boys'" (1982: 208). These "dividing practices, broadly speaking, are techniques of domination and have been applied mainly to vagabond populations, the working classes, those defined as marginal, etc." (Rabinow 1991: 11). Given that my task is to describe life in the village within a 'smaller order of hierarchy', I maintain that 'differentiating practices' are not only 'techniques of domination' but also tactics of resistance. In daily life, Zhao villagers engage in different kinds of 'differentiating practices' which demarcate 'we' from 'they', or 'self' from 'other'. It is important to notice that the notion 'we' or 'they' is not bounded with an unchanging frame of reference. Instead, the 'differentiating practices' are situation-specific.

* * *

In this chapter, I shall first briefly discuss the uses of three calendars in the village. Secondly, I will look, from an observer's point of view, at the basic mode of production and reproduction of population (both man and animal) and agriculture as a circle of livelihood. Then, I shall start my account of the daily practices with my encountering my host in Dawa. I need to point out that the encounter with my host in Dawa is not simply about my personal experiences with Wanbin and his family; rather, my experiences in Dawa recurrently re-emerged, and were reinforced and reiterated by my encounters with other Zhao villagers later on in my fieldwork. Although I am a native Chinese, I was often puzzled and surprised by my early fieldwork experience. I shall present not only the ethnographic 'facts' but also my puzzlement and surprise

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[2]In an effort to criticise the popular notion of 'local people making their own history', Asad has made a distinction between the notion 'agent' and 'subject'. According to him, 'agent' refers to the principle of effectivity while 'subject' to that of consciousness. He argues that action means more than consciousness, see his 1993: 13-19.

[3]For a discussion of selfhood and otherness in Confucian thought, see Tu 1985. One important aspect of Confucian selfhood is its stress on self-development as a process, according to Tu.

in this chapter. Finally, I will turn to examine several significant themes of the daily practices in the village, covering a range of different topics, such as bargaining, decoration, politeness, 'violence', craftsmanship, which are central to what is suppose to be Zhao villagers as 'subjects' or 'persons'.

5.1 The Uses of Three Calendars

Zhao villagers use three calendars for different purposes. These three calendars can be respectively called the traditional lunar calendar (TLC), the traditional solar calendar (TSC) and the western solar calendar (WSC). There has been a long history of the uses of these three calendars in rural Chinese communities. When describing a Jiangsu village more than fifty years ago, Fei demonstrated how the three calendars were applied in organising different social activities in Kaixiangong (Kaihsienkung if spelled in the Wade system). As he showed, the traditional lunar calendar "has its widest use in such situations as remembering sentimental events and making practical engagement. It serves as a system of names for the dates in the traditional social activities" (Fei 1939: 148). The traditional solar system is used for organising agricultural activities. The western solar calendar is used for scheduling the newly introduced institutions such as the village school and the village factory (Fei 1939: 148-51).[4] In a sense, this picture that Fei described fifty years ago remains unchanged in Zhaojiahe. Social activities such as weddings and funerals are scheduled there according to the traditional lunar calendar. Festivals and market days are also arranged due to the traditional lunar system. When talking about agricultural activities, Zhao villagers refer to the traditional solar system, which is often called the *jie-qi* system ('section system'). Due to the fact that there is no village industry in Zhaojiahe, the western solar calendar is by and large restricted to the arrangement of the school curricula.

Table 5 shows the arrangement of agricultural and social activities in accordance with the traditional solar and lunar calendars. On the left side of the table are listed the important agricultural activities that Zhao villagers carried out in the early 1990s. When talking about scheduling these activities, Zhao villagers refer to the traditional solar calendar, that is, *jie-qi*. For instance, if asked when the harvest of wheat was going to be, Zhao villagers would have answered this question by saying that it was going to occur at about the time Mangzhong came. Mangzhong came at three minutes past seven o'clock on the fifth of June in 1992. Among all agricultural activities, growing winter wheat is given a significant priority. Cotton is the dominant cash crop. The following table shows the agricultural engagement among different households in Dawa in 1991-92:

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[4]For a brief discussion of the organisation of the traditional Chinese lunar and solar calendars and their differences from that of the western calendar, see Fei 1939: 144-8. For the social use of the traditional Chinese calendars, see also M. C. Yang 1945: 90.

Engagement	No. of households	Percentage in total
wheat	20	100%
cotton	20	100%
corn	6	30%
sweet potatoes	11	55%
hot pepper	17	85%
water melon	2	10%
soybean	3	15%

With respect to agriculture, the busiest period of a year is from Chunfen to Qiufen, which is roughly from March/April to September/October. Winter is the leisure time when most social activities take place. For households which do not engage in growing cash crops other than cotton, winter will mean a long break. Taking into account the relatively limited amount of land that each villager was contracted to cultivate, winter for many Zhao villagers is the season of leisure for organising social activities and entertaining their relatives and guests.

Social activities, as we can see on the right side of the table, include three basic categories: holidays or festivals, market days and days for the remembrance of ancestors. The Chinese New Year's celebration includes a period of five or six weeks, which starts from the fifth of the twelfth month of the previous year and continues until at least the fifteenth of the first month of the new year. Most weddings take place in the first month of the Chinese lunar calendar. Even funerals are intended to be organised in the first month of the Chinese lunar year. If a person dies in summer when everyone is busy, the dead person is likely to be buried in a very simple way at that time and will be formally and properly prepared a funeral later during the New Year period. One of the most important social activities during the New Year period is to visit *zijiawu*, relatives, neighbours and friends.

Once a year there is a village market gathering, which is called Zhaojiahe Hui, on the first of the third month of the lunar year. During the third month of the lunar year there is also a series of *hui* ('market gatherings') in the neighbouring villages around Zhaojiahe. Zhao villagers join these *hui* not only for transactions but also, more importantly, for the exchange of steamed bread with their relatives. Manqian and Manpa are two occasions which are organised before and after each year's harvest of wheat. Mothers and daughters will visit each other and steamed bread will be exchanged among relatives. Women are particularly concerned with these two occasions. On the ninth of the seventh month of the lunar year there is a significant *hui* in Qincheng which goes on for three days. All Zhao villagers go to join it at least for one day.

As in other parts of China, Qingmin is the time for remembrance of those who have died - ancestors in particular. Zhao villagers will visit their father/mother or grandfather/grandmother's graves and light some candles as well as burn incense. When they go to visit the grave, Zhao villagers will bring some food with them, most commonly steamed bread but sometimes noodles. Another occasion of remembrance of ancestors is the first of the tenth month of the lunar year. 'Paper money' is supposed to be burned in front of one's courtyard in the early morning.

When I was in the village, some villagers talked to me about the significance of serving the kitchen god. That is, how to prepare to send the kitchen god to Heaven on the twenty third of the twelfth month and how to receive the god back on the thirtieth of the same month. But I did not find any evidence of involvement in such activities in the households that I visited. Although Zhao villagers may still tell the story of the kitchen god, just as we have been told for centuries, they do not have to do what they say. On the wall where they said they should place a picture of the kitchen god, instead, they might have placed a picture of a half naked Hollywood actress, smiling at the oven. The implication is that, in respect to the activities of ancestor remembrance, it is the practical arrangement itself that survives, remains, and maintains a function, while the symbolic, sentimental, interpretative meanings, which are said to attach to these activities, have disappeared. It is because of this practicality that food is always required when carrying out such activities on the one hand and, on the other, it is also because of food that this practicality can be sustained. As I have argued in the previous chapter, food embodies the social rhythm. For Zhao villagers, their stomach is a social clock.

There are two occasions in which the western solar calendar has to be referred to. One concerns the village school schedule. Pupils still have semesters arranged according to the western calendar. It is the responsibility of the local government to arrange time schedules for the village school. Pupils are given national holidays which are ignored by Zhao villagers. For instance, the first of June is set to be the Children's Day and there will always be arrangements of celebrations on this day for pupils, though no Zhao villagers will pay any attention to it. The other use of the western calendar concerns only those who work in the towns or cities. A Zhao villager may refer to the western calendar, if he has a son who works outside the village, in order to calculate when his son is able to come back. Although many national holidays such as the National Day are set up according to the western calendar, Zhao villagers completely ignore these holidays when the official celebrations are held. Once, when I talked to a villager about the National Day (the first of October), he responded firmly, "No, we do not have that. What is the point of having it? Every day is a holiday if we do not work. Who bothers to celebrate the National Day? Nobody will give us anything. We do not celebrate it either!"

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Let me simply point out that, by using three different calendars, Zhao villagers are aware of the existence of different frames of reference for organising their social and agricultural activities.

5.2 The Circle of Livelihood

Has life in the village changed? It depends on who is answering this question to whom under what circumstance. Looking at the past, the old generations of Zhao villagers, particularly women, tend to stress the change that has taken place in their life time. For instance, Yangkai's mother once said to me, "Nowadays everything is different from the past. When I was married into the village, few households were capable of building brick *yao*, but now everyone can build brick *yao*. Nowadays, all people are 'able people' *(neng-de)*." Among male villagers, this sense of

change is often talked about in terms of a particular kind of work - the way in which wheat is processed into flour. In the past, flour processing was done by either animal or human labour. To do so, a specially designed stone mill, which was extremely heavy, needed to be tied to a millstone. On the top of it there was a long stick, by which either a donkey or a person was able to move the millstone to grind. It was strenuous work. Those who had tried it often said, 'that was not work which was supposed to be done by human beings'. It was not only strenuous but also time consuming. After 1949, Zhao villagers were organised into the people's commune and started to use water mills. After 1989, when electricity was available in the village, wheat processing became very simple. There were three families in 1992 operating electric mills for wheat processing.

As I have shown in Chapter 1, when talking about the economic reforms in the 1980s, Zhao villagers refused to admit that there had been significant changes with regard to their living standards during this period, although they have experienced rapid income increases in the past fifteen years.

From an outsider's point of view, however, life in Zhaojiahe could be argued to be self-sustainable. To a great extent, Zhao villagers could have relied on resources within the village to maintain their daily production and consumption (see Figure 6). Firstly, Zhao women spin and weave to produce cloth and clothes, though the young generations have started to purchase their dresses from markets outside the village. To the majority of Zhao villagers, the purchase of clothes from markets was a recent experience. It is not unusual to see young villagers wearing western style suits bought from the town market; it is also not unusual to see the elderly wearing traditional Chinese style jackets made at home. Women still weave and spin in winter, using cotton that Zhao villagers grow for themselves. Apart from one household in Dawa, all the rest - 19 households - kept their looms in their houses, when I was in the village.

Zhao villagers grow wheat in order to make steamed bread, which is the main type of food in the village. As they said, they could survive well on steamed bread and hot peppers alone. Different parts of wheat are used for different purposes. Zhao villagers use bran, often together with other kinds of fodder, to feed draught animals such as cows, mules, donkeys, etc. They use straw - which is also sometimes used for feeding, particularly cows - as fuel to burn underneath the bed. To light a fire on the inside of the bed is the only means of keeping a room warm in winter. Men and animals work together to produce wheat which in turn is consumed by both men and draught animals. Men and animals are thought to be both producers and consumers.[5] In comparison with the social functions attributed to wheat, other types of grain production are insignificant.

Materials that Zhao villagers require for the construction of their houses and rooms are mud and clod, of which they can take as much as they want from the hills around the village. Many Zhao villagers know how to make bricks with self-built brick-kilns. When I was in the village, I saw the half-processed bricks piled up everywhere in the village, since many households were preparing to build new houses.

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[5]When discussing the components of a Chinese family, M. C. Yang pointed out that draught animals, particularly oxen, in Taitou were thought to be members of a farm family, 1945: 47, 49.

Zhao villagers walk to reach most places which they want to visit, although the bicycle is the most popular means of transportation. The bicycle is the only daily demand that Zhao villagers have to purchase from markets. There is at least one bicycle in each household, sometimes two or even three. There was no motorcycle in the village but there were eleven small tractors, which are mainly used for transportation. Other industrial goods, such as watches and radios, were popular, especially since the 1980s. After 1989, when electricity became available, television sets came to the village. Electricity has changed many aspects of life in the village. Different kinds of machines such as wheat processing machines, cotton processing machines and so forth came into Zhaojiahe, although, by and large, electricity is used domestically for non-productive purposes.

Figure 6 presents a simplified - if not too simplified - picture of how the life of the village could be seen as a self-sustainable, closed circle. To the eyes of an outsider, be he either a Chinese official or an anthropologist from the west, life in Zhaojiahe could be represented as 'traditional'. First, production is still by and large for self-consumption. About ninety percent of their wheat production is consumed by Zhao villagers themselves. Second, it is a face to face community in which there is no telephone or other means of modern communication. Third, there is a circular mode of production. Agricultural production mainly depends upon human and animal labour. Men and animals not only consume what they produce but also supply their manure to nurture the land. It is only very recently that Zhao villagers started to use chemical fertilisers. Fourth, land is important not only in the sense that it provides the means of production but also in the sense that it supplies materials for house construction.

5.3 Encountering My Host in Dawa

My early experience in Zhaojiahe still makes me wonder: why do Zhao villagers act in certain ways and not others? What is the logic of their practices? This question can only be answered - if it is answerable at all - by looking at the way that Zhao villagers engage in various kinds of daily practices. I shall introduce several main themes of daily practices in Zhaojiahe later. First, let me start with my own experience of encountering my host, which will help us understand the daily concerns of Zhao villagers and the way in which these concerns are articulated.

5.3.1 *Wei-sheng* ('hygiene' or 'hygienic')

The first surprise - if not entirely pleasant - of my encounter with my host in Dawa was about his use of the idea of *weisheng* (literally, 'hygiene' or 'hygienic'). This word, *weisheng*, which could be similarly used in mandarin, was used in the village mainly for the purpose of social criticism, which derives from its surface meaning of keeping clean, particularly in relation to either clothes or food. *Weisheng* or, rather more often, *bu-weisheng* (literally, 'not hygienic'), is not a word that Zhao villagers use within their homes or among family members; instead, it is a notion that is publicly manipulated in order to judge or criticise others.

As soon as I arrived in the village, I found that everything domestic, such as beds or ovens, was built of mud and bricks. This area is also very windy, particularly in spring. I had the experience of not being able to see anything within several feet when the whole sky was covered by yellow-grey grains of dust whirling and tossing through a horrifying wind. So dust is natural to daily living. Windows and doors are often left open in the village. Even when they are closed, there are still large gaps between two sides of a door or a window. When one touched a bed or a table in a room, one would always feel a layer of dust on the top of it. It may not be dirty, but it is certainly very dusty.

Nevertheless, Zhao villagers do not bathe - absolutely not in winter,[6] though sometimes young people do in summer in order to cool themselves. To Zhao villagers, to take a bath means to get cool. Bathing is not related to hygiene. However, Zhao villagers wash their face regularly. There is a washing bowl in each household, usually in the *yao*. In Zhaojiahe, there is little difference in terms of the arrangement of the washing bowl from one household to another. Above the washing bowl, which is usually set upon a bench, there is a thin rope on which a towel is hung. None of the households I visited had more than one towel prepared. On returning from the field, Zhao villagers, that is, the members of a family, took turns to wash their hands and face. Usually poured by the housewife, the water was often too little to cover the bottom of the bowl. Everyone washed in the same water. There usually is a sequence for those who need to wash: father, son, wife, daughter-in-law. Each person, after washing, will use the towel on the rope to dry both his or her face and hands. The towel will be used until it is torn. Some villagers do not even wash their face; instead, they only wash their hands in the bowl and use the towel to dry-clean their face.

The guest is often granted the privilege to wash first. For the first few days after my arrival in the village, I was offered the washing facilities first since I was taken as a formal guest. Every time Wanbin, my host in Dawa, came home and was ready to wash, he always asked me whether I would like to wash first. However, after several days of staying with Wanbin's family, I was no longer taken as a guest. Hence I was asked to wash before the women, as all the men were, but no longer to wash first. Sometimes, the water could be very dirty after Wanbin and his son finished their washing. But more difficult for me to get accustomed to was the use of the same towel.

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I thought that everything in the village was very dusty and Zhao villagers were by no means too keen on cleanliness and, in order to get close to them, I had better wear things in the way they did. In the beginning, I did not pay much attention to how I dressed. I had an old jacket and a pair of grey, loose trousers. They were perfect for me to do anything in the village, either sit on the ground or help with agricultural work in the field. I did not wash my trousers for a few weeks. To wash meant a complicated operation, including either going to get water from the well at the other end of the village or travelling to the little stream quite far away. It is always Zhao women who wash clothes for the whole family. They wash their clothes regularly. Since it was

[6]See also Chapter 1, Section 1.2.

very dusty everywhere, both inside and outside, I thought that I did not need to change my trousers too often. One day, my host in Dawa, Wanbin, came to me with a slightly strange, if not awkward, look on his face - a kind of mixture of embarrassment and shyness, with which I was familiar only on occasions when young women in the village tried to talk to me. Wanbin started to comment on my notebooks, saying that they were really good ones because they were made of clip pages. And then he moved to appraise my colour pens which I used for classifying my notes. After half an hour of incomprehensible compliments to my belongings, at a very slow pace, Wanbin started to mention that, even in the countryside, people had to pay attention to the problem of *weisheng*. I did not know what he meant in this context but tried to comply with him by muttering words such as 'ye-a', 'we-e-ell'. After a while, when Wanbin had fully discussed his point about *weisheng*, he asked me lightly: "What about your trousers?" What about my trousers? I wondered. "There is a lot of dust on them." Wanbin had to point it out. "Well, I don't want to change my outer dress too often because it is very dusty", I replied. Wanbin said in an affirmative tone: "But that is not *weisheng*". I did not understand why it was not *weisheng* to wear a pair of dusty trousers, which was by no means dustier than the bed or the table in the room that I stayed. Wanbin explained this to me: "You are a person from a big city. You therefore should be paying more attention to *weisheng*. If you do not care about *weisheng*, people will laugh at you. To let people laugh at you does no good to my family because you are my guest. Anyway, your trousers are too dusty for you to sit on the bed, because you will make the bed dirty". When talking to me, Wanbin kept smiling at me as if I would understand immediately.

As Wanbin pointed out clearly, *weisheng* (that is, 'to be hygienic') is not a personal choice but in nature a social requirement since it is linked with how other people will judge you. Others would 'laugh at' (i.e. 'look down upon') those who do not comply with socially defined notions of cleanliness. To be clean is a matter of keeping hygienic; it is also a matter of complying with the social 'norms'. A 'hygienic self' is thus divided from an 'unhygienic other'. To be clean, for Zhao villagers, is less a matter of one's own than it is a matter of showing it to others. Because I came from a big city and was taken as a formal guest who could help Wanbin to demonstrate his connections with the outside world, I had to wear things that could show the difference. It may not have much to do with being hygienic, but it certainly has a great deal to do with implementing a kind of power. In this way, Zhao villagers use the notion of *weisheng* or bu-*weisheng* to differentiate or divide people into different categories, in order to place their criticism towards others.

Once when I went to a wedding with my host's second son, Xincang, in another village, we joined the wedding feast. It was not a more extravagant feast than other feasts that I had attended but, in whatever sense, the food was much better than what we had for daily meals. There were three courses of food, including different vegetable and meat dishes. I felt that it was a quite nice wedding. However, when I went back to Dawa, to my surprise, Xincang, who had been back a little earlier than I did, was having another meal. When I got into the room, Xincang's mother, Yin'ai, smiled at me and asked, "Teacher Liu, what do you think about the wedding meal?" "It was nice, wasn't it?" I replied with slight hesitation. Yin'ai then turned to her son expecting his comments. Xincang raised his head and said, "It was *bu weisheng* (literally, 'not

hygienic')". Yin'ai, who had not gone to the feast, concluded with certainty, "I know that *na-wu dong-xi jiu shi bu weisheng* (literally, 'that family's food is never hygienic')". A few days later, I talked with a neighbour of Wanbin's, and he said, "That was a nice feast. Xincang is fussy because he thought that they did not put him at the particular table at which he wanted to sit. Xincang was unhappy about the arrangement and he thought that they were not polite to him. Xincang had to eat again in order to show to everyone his dissatisfaction". This may also be a biased comment. However, what I intend to stress is the fact that the notion of being or not being hygienic is understood and used in the village as a means of judging and criticising others, which is intrinsically social.

Underlying this judgement, there is a general concern of avoiding being 'laughed at' by others. To Zhao villagers, it is very important to comply with social requirements; otherwise, one will be 'laughed at' by others. When asked why Zhao villagers do not do things in another way, they will say, "No, one can't do that in that way. *Ren jia xiao hua* (literally, 'others would laugh at you')". *Ren-jia-xiao-hua,* which was a public and popular phrase, could mean that 'others would look down upon you', but it is not necessarily meant to be negative. It is an anticipation of what others would think of you if you did something that was not socially acceptable. There are no explicit rules imposed by others but one acts according to his or her anticipation of what others would judge or say. Zhao villagers do not want to be 'laughed at' by others.

A Zhao villager as a 'person' *(ren)* must be alert: he must be constantly conscious of what other people would think about him, though this notion 'other people' varies according to different situations. In the above case, Wanbin differentiates himself from others by seeing himself (as well as his family) as having connections with the outside world. In so doing, Wanbin has already shown that Zhao villagers as a collective entity are inferior to others, for instance, those who come from cities. It is worth noting that Zhao villagers often place themselves at the bottom of the social hierarchy in order to deny they are responsible for what is happening in the village or society. In so doing, they gain an absolute right to criticise, to my mind. The point I want to make is that, in everyday practices, Zhao villagers differentiate or 'divide' people according to different situations. There are many possible ways of defining 'self' and 'other'. This idea of how one is related to other people is a very important exercise of being a 'person' *(ren)* in the village. It is important to notice that the everyday practices, through which one becomes a 'person', are situational in nature.

5.3.2 *Ren-jia xiao-hua* ('others would laugh at you')

A few weeks after my arrival in the village, I became much more conscious of what I should do, but the difficulty is that there was no explicit rule that one could follow. Zhao villagers are experts at judging different situations and choosing different strategies in order to avoid being 'laughed at' by others. Let me take the example of the daily exchange of cigarettes to show the delicacy and tactics involved in the strategy of avoiding being impolite to others.

Case 5.1 Offering or being offered a cigarette

All males and some elderly females smoke. To smoke is called *chi-yan* (literally, 'to eat a cigarette or smoke' instead of 'to have cigarette or smoke'). It is a very common daily scene to see

Zhao villagers invite others to smoke. There are two ways of smoking. Traditionally, Zhao villagers smoked *shui-yan-dai* (literally, 'water pipe') which is made of a long, bent pipe with a little box fixed at one end. The pipe is about a foot long and the box, which contains water inside, is slightly thicker than a large match box. Water pipes are often made of iron. There is a very small pit on the top of the box where tobacco can be put in. To smoke a water pipe, one needs to use a lighter constantly, since the tobacco in the small pit will be extinguished without continuous lighting. There is only one water pipe in each household, so Zhao villagers, when visiting others, have to share the water pipe with their host. However, recently, Zhao villagers, especially young people, started to smoke more cigarettes. Cigarettes were thought to be more polite if offered to a guest. Among neighbours, it was not necessary to provide cigarettes. Offering and being offered a cigarette was one of the most popular daily practices.

Wanbin and Wanyou are close *zijiawu* brothers and both live in Dawa. More often than not, it was Wanyou who would visit Wanbin after lunch. The following is my observation on the third day after my arrival. However, this example represents the daily practice of cigarette offering which bears a general characteristic of how to avoid being criticised for being impolite, that is, to avoid being 'laughed at' by others.

Wanyou came into Wanbin's house with his hands wrapped in his sleeves, and very slowly moved to sit at the edge of the bed. Several seconds later, Wanbin, still having his lunch, raised his head and said: "Eat a cigarette (chi-yan). This is Teacher Liu's cig." When I came to the village, I had brought my host two large packages of cigarettes. Wanyou replied with certainty, "No, I just had one". Wanbin, ignoring Wanyou's response, nodded to his daughter-in-law to show where the matches were. A box of matches was then passed by Wanbin's daughter-in-law to Wanyou. Wanbin said again "Eat!" Wanbin then stood up from his short-legged dining table, since there was no other person who was close to Wanyou, to reach the cigarettes. Wanbin passed the box of cigarettes to Wanyou, and the latter put it aside on the table without saying anything. When Wanbin returned to his dining table, he gave his invitation again, "Eat one cigarette". "No, no. I just had my water pipe and don't want it", Wanyou insisted. After a few seconds of silence, Wanbin then said, "That is different. Eat a cig." Wanyou stretched his back while saying, "Nowadays, I am too lazy to eat a smoke. People say smoking is unhealthy". While Wanyou had still not yet finished his sentence, he picked up one cigarette and smoked it. He continued to smoke about three or four cigarettes after that and then switched to the water pipe.

When entertaining male guests, being a good host means to keep one's guests smoking without stop. To a host, to fail to persuade one's guests to smoke without stop is seen as impolite, socially inadequate behaviour. It would be 'laughed at' by others. However, on the other hand, those who are offered a smoke have to say 'no' in the first instance. One has to say that one does not want to smoke when one is offered cigarettes on formal occasions. It does not mean that one should not smoke but rather that, in order to avoid being 'laughed at', one needs to show one's politeness by refusing to smoke in the beginning. Furthermore, when one actually accepts an offer, one often says 'no' instead of 'yes' to notify the acceptance, otherwise one will be thought to be impolite or be 'laughed at'.

To offer others cigarettes is a social practice which requires proper preparations. Once Wanyou proudly illustrated the point to me that Zhao villagers always kept several different kinds of cigarettes ready in their different pockets. As Wanyou said to me, "Of course, different people have to be offered different kinds of cigarettes. When we offer cigarettes, we will have to think about who they are. In different pockets, we usually have different kinds of cigarettes, ranging from the very best to the ordinary. If it is just a neighbour, one will offer him an ordinary cigarette, even the water pipe will do. If it is someone from the town or the cities, one will have to offer the guest at least a 'filter', otherwise, the host will be 'laughed at' by others." As Wanyou said to me, some villagers even put different brands of cigarettes into one package from which they

can pick up the right choice for the right persons with their tactical fingers. In the village, there is a consensus about which brand of cigarettes is better than another. The criteria, if not entirely so, are closely related to the prices of different cigarettes. In general, a filtered cigarette is thought to be better than one without a filter.

This practice of providing different treatment to different people may also be found in other rural communities in China or even in other societies, but my point is that Zhao villagers make a very explicit stress on this strategy as a positive social practice. I believe that to give this practice a positive value is related to the current condition of the society and the way in which Zhao villagers assess it. In my view, the economic reforms in the past ten years have brought a greater consciousness to them of their being peasants, placed at the bottom of the hierarchy of the changing society. As Zhao villagers insist, peasants are nowadays often 'laughed at' by others, and therefore they have to behave differently on different occasions. Furthermore, I also need to point out that Zhao villagers see people as socially or economically or politically differentiated. Discrimination is often given a positive evaluation.

There are many other occasions, such as entertaining guests at banquets, or offering wines to others, and so forth, on which a similar strategy is needed. People are differentiated by Zhao villagers on various daily occasions. I have outlined several basic frames of reference of differentiating people in the last chapter (see Figure 5) - zijiawu/relatives, men/women, table/bed, host/guest, inside/outside. It is important to notice that people are further differentiated - socially, economically or politically - within each category according to different situations. For instance, a guest may be valued according to where he comes and what social and economic power he has. What I need to stress is that differentiating people is a practice, which does not rely on an established ideology of social hierarchy. Social relationships are made and maintained through practice.

The phrase that captures the indigenous articulation of the necessity of treating people differently is 'others would laugh at you'. Zhao villagers anticipate what other people will say about them or how other people will judge them. We do not actually know - on many occasions - what other people would say if Zhao villagers did what they were afraid of and avoid doing. I had experiences of how Zhao villagers 'laughed at' those who did not do things properly. Let us see another example.

5.3.3 *Pu-su* ('to be simple and plain')

For this word, a literal translation will only lead to confusion. *Pusu* in Chinese, both used in mandarin and the local dialect, is often applied to describe one's attitude towards a life style. If one prefers to wear simple clothes and to live simply, particularly in the case that one has the ability to live differently, one will be called, often with a positive connotation, a *pusu* person. During the Maoist period, to be *pusu* was made a revolutionary virtue. The communist heroes such as Lei Fen were always represented as having a *pusu* life style as well as a set of *pusu* proletarian emotions. In Zhaojiahe, to be *pusu* is no longer taken as a completely positive, admirable, good quality since it may also indicate that one's family is poor. In Zhaojiahe, as a social criterion, to be *pusu* is related rather to incompetence and inability to achieve a better life.

In the early 1990s, people who are termed *pusu* in the village are often those who are poor and are disliked.

Case 5.2 My friend's *pusu* overcoat

To my surprise, a Chinese friend of mine, who was living in Australia, came to the village to visit me just after the Chinese New Year's Day (4 February 1992). Since she had been working all the time in the field of art design, she was particularly careful about what she wore. When she came to the village, she was wearing a long, beautiful overcoat which made me a little nervous. I did not want to jeopardise my relationship with - as I thought by then after several weeks of staying in the village - those *'pusu'* villagers, especially my host's family. I was afraid that, having associated me with my fashionable friend, Zhao villagers might keep a distance from me. She did not wear high heels, but her overcoat was very eye-catching. No woman in the village was wearing anything like that. Zhao villagers usually wore the traditional style of the two-piece suit. Men in the village quite often wore the Mao suit, while women tended to have colourful upper dresses. My friend's long overcoat made me uneasy since it was of a fashionable design, which was orange-yellow and pink-red with an elegant designer's label on the back of the coat. Due to my insistence, she stayed only two nights in the village and left. Dawa villagers talked about her very little when she was there. However, after she left, Wanbin and other Dawa villagers started to make comments upon her appearance. Once when I was talking to Wanbin, he said to me, "Your fiancée is a very *pusu* person. This kind of persons are seldom seen nowadays. Although she lives abroad, she is still very *pusu*". She was by no means my fiancée, but I was still very much puzzled by Wanbin's comments on her and asked, "Why do you think she is *pusu*"? Wanbin replied with an impatience that seemed to suggest that I was blind: "Hei, look at what she wears, a cotton dress even with a patch on her back! Nowadays, who wears clothes with patches? Not even children!" Obviously, Wanbin mistook the designer's label on my friend's back for a patch.

I had not paid much attention to the material of my friend's overcoat which was cotton. What I saw of her overcoat was the design, not the material. However, Dawa villagers saw it differently. What they saw of a dress was what it was made of rather than how it was made. Zhao villagers disliked cotton, because everybody could have it. Zhao women can produce beautiful hand-made cloth at home but they do not give the home-made cotton cloth a high social value. As I once talked to a woman in the village about the beauty of their hand-made cloth, the woman disagreed me with no hesitation: "It (the cotton cloth) can never be as good as the machine-made cloth". Zhao villagers prefer cloth bought from markets, because it is the access to the markets outside the village that counts. Spinning and weaving produce cloth but cannot produce the power that is underlain by the economic reforms. To Zhao villagers, fashion is of no consideration and it is the materials that determine the value of the clothes.

This is the reason why the designer's label on the back of my friend's overcoat was taken by Wanbin as a patch which is thought of as a coverage of a hole on the dress. Until the late 1970s, most Zhao villagers, especially children, had to wear dresses either with holes or patches. In the early 1990s, Zhao children sometimes still wore clothes with patches but few adults were wearing them any more. Zhao villagers care a lot about **what** to wear but not how to wear it. When I once asked an adult villager about what the best thing to wear was, he replied: "the most expensive materials!"

What is the consequence of wearing *pusu* clothes? Zhao villagers will 'laugh at' those who wear them. In my friend's case, because she was wearing an overcoat which was thought of as being *pusu*, she was not actually taken seriously by Dawa villagers, as I realised after she had left. Neither did Dawa villagers come to visit her in particular, nor was particular food prepared for

her. If she were a man, I believe she would not have been treated to filtered cigarettes. By having conversations with Wanbin and his neighbours about my friend, I start to understand their puzzlement: how can a person who comes from a big city abroad dress in this way, which indicates nothing of her social and economic status? If one is being 'laughed at' by Zhao villagers, one will not be taken seriously, which means that one may be socially discriminated against.

The implication of this case study is that the social hierarchy is not an unchanging structure which uniformly determines social actions. At a collective level, Zhao villagers often place themselves at the bottom of the hierarchy but this does not mean that they are not active in exercising their power on various occasions on which they place the 'other' at a lower position in contrast to themselves. In the case of my friend, although she is a city person who lives abroad, she has little power to influence the local affairs. In addition to that, she is thought of as a *pusu* person; she was not, therefore, treated as a significant guest. To differentiate or to 'divide' people requires Zhao villagers to be aware of trivial differences in daily life. This ability of seeing the difference is obtained through practice. Let me take the daily greeting as an example to illustrate my point further.

5.3.4 The social function of daily greeting

On daily occasions, as in other parts of China, one of the most popular greetings in Zhaojiahe is to ask whether one has already had one's meal. In Zhaojiahe, the most common way to do it is to say simply: *Chi-le* ("Eaten?"), or *Zhe-chi-le* (literally, "This eaten?"). It is also possible for them to add a 'you': *Ni-chi-le?* ("You eaten?") I would like to point out that, apart from the semantic significance of food in social interaction, there is a more general, underlying consideration in daily greetings in the village: what are other people doing? Another type of daily greeting in Zhaojiahe is to say *di-kai* (literally, "to the field?"). When Zhao villagers met in the village, they would sometimes just nod or say *dikai* to each other. This simple term can mean either going to the field or coming back from the field. In both cases of daily greeting, Zhao villagers do not *greet* the person concerned but, rather, point out or confirm what this person has been doing.

In order to avoid being 'laughed at' by others, one has to know what other people are doing. Zhao villagers always know what is happening to their neighbours.

Case 5.3 A daily greeting

One day when I was chatting to Wanbin who was making a blackboard for the village, he seemed to be very engrossed in what he was doing. He did not pay much attention to what I had asked him and did not reply to me properly. He wanted to finish his work nicely since it was a piece of work given by the village committee. I started to get a little bored since he was working hard, ignoring my questions about the procedure of the wedding celebration. However, before I decided to leave, he suddenly started to talk - but not to me. Somebody whom I did not notice came from the direction in front of me, which means that the person was coming towards us from the direction behind Wanbin. Wanbin turned his back just on time - when this person was about three or four metres away from us. The person carried a bicycle and did not look much like a villager but I was not very sure at that time. Wanbin said to him: "Have just got off the train." No pronoun was used in his utterance. The person nodded and did not say much and passed by. I was not very certain what this was supposed to be. A greeting? I did not know who this person was, however, it seemed to me a little peculiar that Wanbin talked about getting off the train to someone who was carrying a bicycle. Later on I found out that this person was Gencai who was

from Dawa but temporarily working for the Xiang (township) government. Recently Gencai had gone on an official trip to Xi'an, the capital of the province, and just came back from Xi'an. When I saw Gencai, it was probably the first time that he had come back to Dawa.

Zhao villagers often know what other people are doing, although they may not tell what they know about others. In the above case, Wanbin 'greeted' Gencai by indicating the fact that Gencai had come back from Xi'an sometime earlier. Greeting can be used in this kind of situations as a means of communication. To Zhao villagers, it is dangerous not to know what other people are doing on the one hand and it is impolite not to indicate what others are doing on the other. My point is that the ability of differentiating or dividing people according to different occasions has to be obtained through practice. Many aspects of everyday practices in the village are subtle and sometimes unarticulable. This is why an ethnographic approach to the daily life of the village is very crucial for an understanding of the 'logic of practice' in rural China.

* * *

I need to point out that my encounters with my host in Dawa are not composed of isolated, personal accounts of experiences which only concern Wanbin and his family. These experiences, which are produced and reproduced on daily occasions, are rather significant moments during the whole period of my fieldwork, and they occurred recurrently later on in my fieldwork and thus appealed to me as the entries to an account of the daily practices in the village.

In Zhaojiahe, everyday practices are carried out around the idea of 'not being laughed at by others', which invokes a notion of 'self' or 'person' *(ren)*, that may not always be explicit in the indigenous articulation of social 'norms'. Things have to be done in certain ways but these 'certain ways' may not be possible to articulate. This is why we have to examine very carefully the detailed aspects of everyday practices in the village. First of all, these are the practices that differentiate or 'divide' people on various daily occasions. To Zhao villagers, one has to do things properly according to specific situations in which one is engaged. I stress the importance of seeing social actions and actors as being situated in practice. There is no overt articulation about what is socially inappropriate in Zhaojiahe; neither shall I argue that Zhao villagers possess internal, psychologically defined categories - either conscious or subconscious - of social conscience that organise their action. It is rather the effect, the situation, the practice that determine what strategies they choose and how they act.

5.4 Everyday Practices

I shall describe four main themes of everyday practices. First, I shall discuss the difference between the ways in which Zhao villagers deal with 'outsiders' and 'insiders'. The model for dealing with 'outsiders' is bargaining, while the guiding principle for dealing with their own brothers, especially when concerning matters such as transaction, is 'indirectness'. Second, I shall discuss a set of practices through which Zhao villagers obtain abilities to comply with different kinds of social requirements. For instance, to be polite in the village, one often needs to make promises that will never need to be realised. In other words, to be polite in the village often

means to follow certain social rules without necessary personal commitments. I argue that this is a practice that allows individuals to recognise certain social norms on the one hand and, on the other, to retain their personal feelings or emotions, separate from these norms. In order to comply with these social norms, physical contact is often used as a means of action. This is the third theme that I shall introduce: how body contact is used for different purposes in daily life. To my eyes, the various forms of body contact are 'violent' because they could cause physical damage to the people involved. However, this may not be a justifiable claim if we consider how Zhao villagers interpret or explain 'violent' physical contact in their terms. The last theme that I shall introduce in this section is the way in which Zhao villagers engage in daily agricultural work. I will show how craftsmanship provides a model for Zhao villagers to engage in agricultural or other kinds of daily work.

5.4.1 Bargaining and 'indirectness'

In daily life, Zhao villagers often refer to the notion of *li* (i.e. the 'inside') versus *wai* (i.e. the 'outside') as a guiding principle for action. Either notion *li* or *wai* is relative; it can be used for different occasions to mean different things. Let me introduce an example. To prepare for the celebration of the Chinese New Year, Zhao villagers put auspicious scrolls on the walls of their different rooms, including the cow shelter. On these scrolls are written Chinese characters wishing a prosperous new year. What is interesting is that Zhao villagers seem to care little about how the scrolls are written, but are more careful about how these scrolls, which are often vertically written, should be placed on to the walls. When Zhao villagers put these scrolls on to their walls, they will place them carefully to make sure that they are leaning slightly to the inside of a room. The slope should be about twenty to thirty degree with the top of a scroll inclining towards the inside of a room. I asked why they were so careful about the way in which a scroll was placed. They told me that, because these scrolls meant to represent good fortunes, they must be placed in a position inclining towards the inside, which means, if there were good fortunes in the coming new year, they should 'flow' toward the inside (i.e. *'li'*) of a family rather than toward the outside (i.e. *'wai'*).

Zhao villagers are conscious of the division between *'li'* and *'wai'*, that is, the division between the 'insider' and the 'outsider', the division between one who is included by a grouping and one who is excluded. In the early 1990s, this division between *li* and *wai* is a particularly important consideration when Zhao villagers deal with different kinds of transactions with different people on different social occasions. Below, I shall introduce two models to illustrate how different strategies are applied regarding this difference.

Bargaining

Bargaining is a daily activity in the village. Nowhere in the markets, except for a few of the state owned supermarkets in the town, is there a price label on the goods the traders sell. Even if there was a price label, Zhao villagers would still try to bargain or make comments on the price before making their decision to buy or not. Bargaining can be very time consuming. The

following example shows how Zhao villagers purchase vegetables on daily occasions in the Qincheng free market.

Case 5.4 At the Qincheng vegetable market

In front of the headquarters of the Qincheng village committee, there is a T-shape intersection where the vegetable market is arranged along both sides of three directions. Traders are supposed to put all their vegetables, such as carrots, cabbages, potatoes, hot peppers, Chinese chives and so forth, on the ground and carry with themselves their own steelyards, waiting for customers. Most of these traders are men from the neighbouring villages. Those who want to buy vegetables are often women and will not buy anything before they inspect and visit all the different vegetable stalls. One is not only supposed to inspect the quality of the vegetables at different stalls but also to check the prices. After the tour, covering all different stalls, Zhao villagers will choose one stall with which to bargain. The following is an example of bargaining, reconstructed from one of my tapes. The buyer was a woman in her late twenties. She had twice passed the stall where I was doing my recording, and finally she stopped and started to ask for prices. The primary monetary unit employed in the conversation is *yuan*.

The woman: What about your chives? (While asking the price, the woman squatted to break off with her fingers the chives in bundles in order to check the quality. She paid great attention to the inside of each bundle of the chives.)
The trader: Six *jin*. Three *jin* for *wu-mao* (i.e. 0.5 *yuan)*
The woman: Ya, ya, what kind of a precious thing are you selling? Dare you give only six *jin*. Even in the town it is seven *jin* per *yuan*.
The trader: Impossible! That is impossible. Impossible, you know. You know how much these chives cost me? For several days, I have been selling them for a price lower than that for which they were imported.
The woman: Seven *jin?*
The trader: No way. (A pause.) If I say I'll give you seven *jin* and then play tricks with the weight, won't it be the same?
The woman: How much if I want only one *jin* then?
The trader: *Yi-mao-qi* (i.e. 0.17 *yuan).*
The woman: Try this amount. (She was passing him what she had chosen from the ground by herself.)
The trader: Two and half *jin*. Add a little bit more, you will make it three *jin*. (The trader bent over and picked up some more for her without waiting for her agreement.)
The woman: Hi, don't do that. I will pick up some more myself.
The trader: Don't you think I'll pick the best for you? The very best for you!
The woman: Don't you dare cheat! (The woman leaned her body over to check the steelyard that the trader was using.)
The trader: You can go to any other place to weigh it. If it is less than three *jin*, I will pay you ten *jin* as compensation.
The woman: Dare you cheat. Why don't you put a little bit more on top of that. Nobody is like you, so petty. What are you so petty for. Would you add a little bit more?! (The woman put more on the steelyard.)
The trader: We can't do that. It is already much more than three *jin*. (He also added a little bit more for her.)
The woman: Who knows about your steelyard. Put a little more.
The trader: Why don't you have six *jin?*
The woman: No. Can't eat them. (She started to take her wallet out.) Here is the money.
The trader: No, this is only *si-mao-qi* (i.e. 0.47 *yuan).* You need to pay another three *fen* (i.e. 0.03 *yuan).*
The woman: That is it. What are you fussing about? You are such a fussy person.
The trader: We dare not do this. That is not a small amount of money and it is three *fen.*
The woman: (reluctantly) Here is another *fen.* That is it.
The trader: Oh, my Jiejie (i.e. the elder sister - the seller is in fact older than the woman). If all people were like you, I'd be broke.
The woman: You will never!

Facing the outsiders, for instance those who trade in the markets, Zhao villagers are direct in bargaining about prices. Zhao villagers also check what they want to buy very carefully and do not trust people from the outside world.

During the period of Chinese New Year in 1992, I went to the town market to buy a large piece of roast beef as a present for my host family. My host family was very happy about having some beef during the New Year. But it turned out that the beef was inedible, because it was a big chunk of cow bowels which was dyed with specially made, artificial colour in order to make it look like real beef. I was very angry and ashamed. Wanbin's wife told me, "Whenever you go to buy things like roast pork or beef, you have to ask them to cut it into tiny pieces, otherwise they will always cheat you". "What would happen if I go back to find the trader?" I asked. "They will never admit it and you have no way to claim your money back unless you know somebody in the town." Two months later, when I moved to stay with Famin, my third host in the village, I bought a thermos bottle from a state-owned shop in the town. After I returned to the village, I found out that the thermos bottle could not maintain the temperature of hot water at all. One hour after I poured in boiled water, it was already cool. I told Famin that I would like to go to change it. Famin said, "Don't bother. They will give you another one the same as this, because they have already tried every one and all the good ones were sold or to be sold to those whom they know, their relatives or friends".

My personal experience may be incidental but the way in which Zhao villagers interpret these 'incidents' is not coincidental. Zhao villagers are always conscious of whom they are dealing with. They will divide people according to different situations as 'insiders' or 'outsiders'. Towards those whom they consider to be 'outsiders', such as traders at markets, Zhao villagers are very careful and always try to avoid being cheated. For instance, if they go to purchase roast pork, they will ask the trader to cut the pork into small slices in order to check whether every piece of the pork is edible. They will also check the steelyard the trader uses. They do not trust any trader. To Zhao villagers, a basic principle in bargaining is to assume that the trader is cheating.

Once, when I was visiting Zunxi's uncle, Yonglu, in Nanjian, as I sat in his room and chatted with him, Yonglu's daughter-in-law's sister came in. The girl looked as if she was in her early twenties. She told Yonglu how much she had spent on buying a wooden bar for her loom. Yonglu immediately frowned at her, asking her how much money she had in the first instance handed over to the carpenter from whom the bar was purchased. The girl said with naiveté that she had only brought a ten *yuan* note and the carpenter did not give back any change. Yonglu then said, "Whenever you go to buy things, never bring big notes. You should only bring small notes. I know someone who had bought a similar bar for only nine *yuan*. Even if it was more than nine *yuan*, it would not have been ten *yuan*. If you had small notes, you could always give him eight *yuan* first and see what he would say. If he considered the fact that we were relatives, he should have charged you only eight *yuan*. But if he asked for more, then you could give him another *yuan*. He would feel embarrassed to ask twice for more. Then you do not have to pay him ten *yuan*. It is because you had only a big note, you were in a disadvantageous position. The carpenter charged you more than he should." This is how Zhao villagers teach their children to deal with the outside world.

The strategies will be different if Zhao villagers deal with their own people, the 'insiders', like *zijiawu* brothers or relatives. With respect to transaction, Zhao villagers do not engage in direct negotiation with their own *zijiawu* brothers or relatives. The principle of indirectness must be applied.

Indirectness

Among *zijiawu*, relatives or neighbours, Zhao villagers are reluctant to negotiate prices directly. Therefore, if it involves buying or selling among *zijiawu* brothers or relatives, a go-between *(zhong-jian-ren)* will be required. As Zhao villagers insisted, they cannot discuss 'certain things' without a go-between as the mediator between the two sides. In my view, this necessity of having a mediator between the two sides shows that Zhao villagers refuse to negotiate, especially about money, with those whom they think of as 'insiders'. That is, one cannot and should not discuss prices with one's own brothers.

There is a wide application of the role of the go-between in the village and, on many social occasions, Zhao villagers turn to their neighbours, relatives or brothers as mediators to negotiate with other brothers or relatives about things that they refuse to discuss with each other directly. The role of the matchmaker *(mei-ren)* with respect to marriage negotiation provides the best example for the necessity and the significance of the role of the go-between. Beside marriage, there are many daily occasions on which Zhao villagers turn to indirect negotiations. Let us first have a look at an example of a straw purchase between two *zijiawu* brothers.

Case 5.5 The straw purchase through a go-between

Wanbin, my host in Dawa, had a cow which consumed a large amount of wheat straw. Straw was often piled up on the reaping yard after harvest. If it was not used as forage for draught animals - some families did not have their own animals - there would be little use for keeping the straw for another year. In the spring of 1992, Wanbin needed more straw for his cow. He first went to see whose pile of straw was the best in quality in the reaping yards, and found out that Jinkai's was kept well and he did not have any draught animal. Although Wanbin and Jinkai were close *zijiawu* brothers and both lived in Dawa knowing each other very well,[7] Wanbin did not directly go to ask Jinkai whether he would like to sell his straw and how much it would be. Wanbin instead went to see Wanyou for help. Wanbin and Wanyou were also close *zijiawu* brothers and lived no more than five metres away from each other. Since they all three lived in Dawa, the actual distance among any two of them was less than one minute's walk.

One early evening, I was having a chat with Wanyou when Wanbin came in. After several rounds of exchange of cigarettes, Wanbin started to comment on the quantity of Jinkai's straw without mentioning Jinkai's name. I was confused at the beginning since I did not know what was going on. The conversation was carried out as if they were talking about something completely irrelevant to them. Short and repetitious words and phrases were exchanged with long pauses in between. Then Wanyou left. When Wanyou returned after a while, he told Wanbin that 'he' (so far I still did not know whom they were talking about) wanted to know who was behind this. Wanbin and Wanyou started to smoke again without talking too much. Wanbin said slowly, "Don't let him know". And then Wanyou left again. When Wanyou returned shortly after, he brought back the same message. Wanbin showed little surprise and began to say that 'he' had no cow, so 'he' had no reason to keep the useless straw, and so forth. Wanyou sat down comfortably in a chair, smoking elegantly and mumbling words from time to time as if he had nothing to do with what he was saying. I then started to gather a picture of what they were talking about but was still uncertain about who owned the straw. Under the pressure of Wanbin's insistence, Wanyou went out one more time. Before Wanyou left, Wanbin told him to tell the other that it was an 'acquaintance' (exactly Wanbin's word: *shuren)* who wanted to buy the straw.

[7]For a discussion of kin relationship between Wanbin's *zijiawu* brothers, see Appendix 2 and Figure 10.

When Wanyou came back the third time, he told Wanbin that Jinkai (It was the first time that I actually heard the name Jinkai being directly mentioned) said 'yes' only if it was required by an 'acquaintance'. Wanbin then returned to his previous comments on the low quantity of Jinkai's straw while Wanyou kept silent. After quite a while, Wanbin asked Wanyou to go to ask Jinkai for how much he would like to sell his straw. Wanyou went and returned soon, not stating directly the price Jinkai offered but, rather, making the opposite comments on the straw by saying that it was a large amount of straw and nowadays the inflation reduced the value of money, and so forth. Wanyou's comment on the straw did not directly contradict what Wanbin said about it. When Wanbin was focusing on its quality, Wanyou talked about the quantity and the actual value of money. About a half hour later, Wanyou went out another time. Another round of discussion about the quality and quantity of the straw resumed when Wanyou came back. Wanbin never suggested an offer, instead he insisted on knowing how much Jinkai would like to sell for in the first place. Finally, after seven rounds of negotiations, Wanyou said that 40 *yuan* was the bottom line. Wanbin replied, "No, no way!". I thought that Wanbin would not buy it because he thought the price was too high. But, as a matter of fact, the transaction was done. They did not have to say 'yes' to indicate their agreement of the offer. They knew where they were. I then realised it was eleven thirty already.

To my mind, there are several aspects of this negotiation that seem to be dubious. Why did Wanbin not go to see Jinkai and talk with him directly? What difference would it make whether Jinkai knew who wanted to buy it or not? Why did Wanbin insist that Jinkai should not know who was trying to buy before the price was negotiated? Why did the negotiation have to be conducted step by step? Several days later, I talked to Wanyou and asked him these questions. Wanyou said, "Let me tell you. You don't know. Certain things are difficult to talk to each other directly *(you xie hua bu hao dang mian shuo).* We are all close *zijiawu.* We are brothers. It is difficult to talk about these things face to face. How can you talk about it if you are brothers?". "What kind of things can't you talk to each other?" I asked. "This kind, just like this. Wanbin would never go to find Jinkai and ask to buy his straw, never", Wanyou was very certain. "I thought Wanbin would not accept the price. Did he buy it in the end?" I asked another question. "He certainly did. He has to buy it, otherwise what will he use to feed his cow? Though he said it was expensive, I know what he really meant. No matter how trivial a gesture he makes, I will immediately know what he means. I am an old man with a tremendous amount of social experiences that enable me to tell what people want. But I did not have to keep Wanbin's secret, and I told Jinkai who wanted to buy it the first time I went to see him anyway", Wanyou added. Later on, when I talked to Wanbin about this purchase, but less directly, he said to me, "Well, no matter how expensive it would be, I had to buy it, otherwise there was nothing for the cow. But I have to be careful. I won't let Jinkai cheat me *(zhan-pian-yi)*".

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One possible analysis is to investigate who is regarded as an 'insider' and who is not on what occasions. However, my interest is less in outlining a framework of such an analysis, which has been partly given in the previous chapter, but more in the way different strategies of differentiating people are employed in everyday practices. I am interested in how an inspection of these different strategies helps us understand a kind of 'personality' in rural China. I maintain that Zhao villagers are made and transformed by the practices they carry out.

There is a sensitive classification of social relations which changes according to different situations in which Zhao villagers define certain people as 'insiders' and others as 'outsiders'. The

point is that the notion 'insider' or 'outsider' varies according to situations. A *zijiawu* brother may not necessarily be an 'insider'; it depends on what situation one faces. When Zhao villagers believe that they are dealing with 'their own people', they will turn to their *zijiawu* brothers or relatives or neighbours as mediators to negotiate for them. Unlike bargaining, on occasions of making transactions with 'their own people', Zhao villagers will try to avoid direct negotiation. Messages in this kind of negotiation are supposed to be hidden, to be implicit, to be guessed, to be imagined, to be expected, to be anticipated. A go-between is an instrument who acts on behalf of others.

5.4.2 Form, decoration and politeness

On certain occasions, Zhao villagers seem to participate, often enthusiastically, in social activities whose 'contents' - so to speak - they ignore. I use the term 'contents' to indicate the collective purpose of these social activities. For instance, at funerals or ceremonies of ancestor remembrance, the collective purpose of celebration is to console the family whose members are lost. Zhao villagers, particularly women, wail on these occasions. However, on the other hand, individuals on these occasions do not have to be 'genuinely' in sorrow or grief. Wailing women can also make jokes about the dead. As a matter of fact, the atmosphere at funerals is often celebratory and happy. A question then raised is: how are individuals able to do so? A set of practices that I shall discuss below will help us understand how Zhao villagers obtain abilities to comply with social norms without rendering their own 'true' personal feelings.

Case 5.6 The travelling cinema

Most Zhao villagers only see films in the village when the travelling cinema comes to Zhaojiahe. The travelling cinemas are either owned by the Xiang government or private entrepreneurs. When they are invited to Zhaojiahe, the villagers have to pay for the performance. In 1992, each film cost sixty *yuan* plus dinner and other kinds of entertainment for the projectionists. On some special social occasions such as the village market day, the village committee may arrange a film night. Otherwise, film teams are often invited by individual families, often for funerals. When there are films, which always take place in the central square of the main village, Zhao villagers will tell each other the news, but they will never tell anyone what films are going to be, or even likely to be, shown. Nobody asks a question about what they are supposed to see. Once a villager told me that there was going to be a film that night, and I asked him what film will be shown. He ignored me and repeated, "A film! You know there will be a film!". Later on, it was even more surprising for me to realise that, when I asked them about the films they had seen the previous night, most villagers did not know what they were. They simply said, "Oh, who knows, some men and some women. They were doing things."

It seems to me that Zhao villagers show little interest in what they would like to see or even what they have seen. Rather, to see a film is a social gathering in which people meet each other and enjoy themselves. No villager really cares about what he or she is going to see. One can argue that this is because the living standard in the village is low and Zhao villagers have no choice of films since the travelling cinemas are invited by others. If their living standards increase, if they go to the cinemas in the cities or towns, they will change their attitudes. Underlying this argument, there is an implicit Marxist assumption - the way in which people engage in social relations or activities is determined by the way in which they produce and live. This may be true but it tells little. It does not tell us about the process in which people in rural

China both produce and are produced by the practices they carry out. I argue that this is a practice that is not only influenced by the living standards in the village but also transforms the people who engage in this kind of practice and, hence, constitutes Zhao villagers as a particular kind of peasant.

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Zhao villagers do not see things in the way that these things are portrayed or understood by the government officials. Because they are able to comply with social norms without rendering their 'true' personal feelings or emotions accordingly, Zhao villagers have little difficulty in resisting the intrusion of official ideologies. In the past, Zhao villagers used old newspapers - the government's propaganda - to decorate their walls. In recent years, the newspapers have been replaced by used calendars which often consist of huge pictures of Chinese beauties, usually actresses. Zhao villagers do not seem to take these pictures as something different from the old newspapers. Either newspapers, in which there are messages from the government, or used calendars, full of pictures of beautiful actresses, are taken as decorations on their walls. What is written or portrayed on these papers is less significant than the purpose of its usage - to decorate the walls.

Case 5.7 The wall decorations

In most cases, the inside of a room often leaves exposed the grey bare bricks. I often saw that Zhao villagers use old newspapers or calendars to cover some of their walls as both means of decoration and protection. The first time I entered Junwu's room - he was a young villager in his early twenties - I was amazed by his wall decorations - all big faces of Chinese beauties cut off from the calendars of the previous years. Many of these beauties on the calendars were film stars, young and pretty. At the beginning, I thought this was Junwu's personal choice because he was a young man who might like female faces to be hung on his walls but, to the contrary, I found out later that almost every household used a similar kind of decorations. In the past few years, many different kinds of beauty calendars were available in the local markets. As a matter of fact, Zhao villagers did not particularly like or dislike these female stars, they just used what they could get to put onto their walls.

It may not be surprising to find, in an old woman's room where she kept the remembrance altar for her recently dead husband, large prints of female actresses on the walls, smiling and staring at the steamed bread that the old woman had prepared for her late husband. Another old woman, Yafen's grandmother, put a calendar of Hong Kong scenery on her wall and one of the pictures showed the big signal of a night-club. When I asked Yafen's grandmother (who was about seventy five) what that signal meant, she smiled at me and said, "How could I know anything about that?" She did not even know that it was Hong Kong since she was one of the few elderly women in the village who were illiterate. Another more interesting example came from an old woman in Nanjian. On her window of the main *yao*, there was a postcard-like picture - not from a calendar: a blonde with an extraordinarily huge pair of breasts sticking out of her bikini, with a seductive smile on her face. I did not know where the old woman got this picture which would be thought of as 'soft-pornography' in Britain. The picture was immediately taken off after I had talked about it to the woman's son. The son of the family told me that he did not know where his mother got it but his mother just felt that *it* was pretty. The son of the family also told me that there had been a campaign in the last summer against "yellow pictures" *(huangse huapian)*, which is the Chinese symbolic expression of pornography in terms of colour. He said to me, "School boys and girls were told by their teachers that these calendar pictures were poisonous. They were told to burn these pictures. My son came home, asking me to burn these pictures". At the first instance I thought he meant that these pictures of women were 'spiritually poisonous' as the communist government often claimed. As a matter of fact, it was not what he meant. For he started to explain why it was poisonous: "Some of these pictures were made of plastic covers which were not good for children. When little babies eat them, they will get sick". This was a very unexpected explanation for the term 'poisonous'. I asked several times to make sure what he really meant. He insisted that it was the plastic covers which were poisonous.

It is evident that the old woman who had the half-naked blonde on her window did not actually see it in the way the government officials saw it. The calendar pictures are used as decoration or protection for the walls just as the used newspapers were. What has been printed on these calendars does not affect their functions as wall decoration and protection. This is the reason that these pictures of beauties can be even put on the top of a remembrance altar for one's late husband. Zhao villagers do not see what is printed on these pictures as related to the function of wall decoration and protection. It seems to me that they are less concerned with what messages are embodied in these pictures or newspapers than what functions these pictures or newspapers maintain. Social norms have to be complied with but personal feelings or emotions do not have to be rendered accordingly. For instance, when the Chinese New Year comes, Zhao villagers will prepare some antithetical couplets *(dui-lian)* to be put on their doors. When I was in the village, I found that Zhao villagers paid little attention to what these antithetical couplets were about and how they were written - as long as there were these couplets on their doors. Some were written in wrong Chinese characters and most of them were written by little children in terrible calligraphy.

* * *

To comply with the social norms, Zhao villagers sometimes say things they do not mean. To be polite often means to make promises which are not supposed to be realised. Zhao villagers stress the importance of being polite on certain occasions, but to be polite itself often becomes an empty promise, just as pictures of beauties or newspapers of government propaganda as decorations on the wall above an altar of the ancestor remembrance.

Case 5.8 Zuncang's promises of visits

Three days after Chinese New Year's Day, I went with Zuncang, the youngest son of my host in Dawa - who was one of the few exceptions who had gone to a university in Qingdao the previous year - to visit his friends in the main village and one of his aunts in another nearby village, Dangjiahe. In the early afternoon, we started our journey. On the way to the main village, we came across a middle aged man carrying his daughter on a bicycle. Even from a long distance, the man immediately recognised Zuncang and they shouted a warm 'hello' to each other. When the man came nearer, Zuncang called him *lao-shi* (literally 'teacher'). They stood in the middle of a road, talking to each other, while I was listening. The man was a teacher from the village school, who used to teach Zuncang. Zuncang paid great respect to his primary school teacher by using a series of polite phrases. The teacher asked Zuncang all the questions about his college life. The way they talked and the words they had exchanged showed such warmth that I was moved. Zuncang also asked his primary school teacher about his family life and where he was going. The teacher told us that he was going to visit a doctor since his daughter did not feel well. The teacher's daughter had been sitting on the back seat of the bicycle while they were talking. When we parted, Zuncang's primary school teacher insisted that, on our way back to Dawa, we must visit his family in Houdi, another villager group of Zhaojiahe. Anyway, Houdi was on our way back to Dawa. Zuncang promised him that we would certainly visit him. During the New Year period, Zhao villagers are supposed to visit their *zijiawu*, relatives, neighbours and friends.

After they had said 'good bye' to each other, they still held each other's hands for a long while. Finally, we moved on. When we reached the main village, Zuncang started to knock on the doors of his high school friends. We tried two doors; unfortunately, both of his friends were not home. They had probably been doing the same thing - visiting others in other villages. I felt sorry for Zuncang but he did not look disappointed or unhappy about it. When we turned to the third door of another friend of his, he uttered in a voice of a mixture of unwillingness and expectation, "I actually hope he won't be home either". What? I thought he was joking and asked him why he did not want his friend to be home. Zuncang explained to me that he did not want to visit any of these villager friends at all but he had to do it, otherwise people would think that he was too proud of himself because he went to university. He did not want to be thought of as arrogant.

That is the reason that he had to visit them but hoped that they were all out. However, this time I felt sorry for him because his friend was at home. Not only his friend but also a group of young people were all there and we joined them. One of the young people had just got a job in Xi'an and he talked a lot about the capital of the province. Zuncang was another focus of attention because he went even further to Shandong Province to study, but Zuncang behaved very timidly and obviously tried not to show too much knowledge or privilege about his experience in a famous coastal city, Qingdao. About an hour later, just as we were preparing to leave, the village head, a young man in his early thirties, came to visit the host of this household of Zuncang's friend. He started to talk to Zuncang on the doorway and insisted that we should go to his place for dinner. Because the village head's wife's sister was Zuncang's brother's wife, it was not a surprising invitation. Again, Zuncang gave the village head a very reassuring answer that we would go to have dinner with his family. I was quite happy about the arrangement since I wanted to meet both Zuncang's school teacher and the village head.

When we arrived in Zuncang's aunt's house in Dangjiahe, it was already about four o'clock in the afternoon. We had a formal meal with four cold dishes and four hot dishes. Zuncang's uncle was not home and we were very relaxed since his aunt and her daughter were very sweet to us. They did not eat together with us but rather had their food on the bed. We talked about how to make steamed bread and other daily aspects of the village life. Time went quickly. It was not until I found that it had already become dark outside that Zuncang, while sipping his tea leisurely and carefully, suggested making a move. I was a little worried about our plan to visit the other two villagers, Zuncang's teacher and the village head. When we actually started to move, it was completely dark outside. It must have been about seven o'clock. I followed Zuncang but found out soon that we would not visit anybody else any more. We were heading home. Half doubtful and half uneasy, I asked Zuncang whether he had forgotten his promises of visiting his teacher and of having dinner with the village head. Zuncang smiled at me and said, "What I said was just to be polite".

Did the village head and the school teacher also know that Zuncang was simply being polite and did not mean what he had said to them? Or were the invitations also simply a social performance of being polite? What would happen if we actually went? Maybe, if we did, we would have been taken as intruders who did not know how to behave. When I was in the village, I often heard Zhao villagers exchanging warm, whole-hearted greetings or invitations, but these invitations were not necessarily taken seriously. It does not matter if one says 'yes' to an invitation but does not go. What is important is to be polite. To be polite in the village requires its social context. On many occasions, Zhao villagers say things that they do not mean. Or they mean what they do not say. I argue that this is a crucial characteristic of everyday practices in Zhaojiahe - people are fully aware of social contexts in which they need to behave in certain ways. These 'certain ways' of doing things in the village not only become social 'norms' but also, more importantly, individuals learn - through practice - to comply with these norms without rendering their 'true' feelings. These social norms are situation-specific. A form of pleasantry is therefore constituted in situational practices.

5.4.3 Politeness and 'violence'

There are many aspects of social life in the village that have to be articulated in terms of politeness. Zhao villagers sometimes use physical contact as a means of persuasion. For instance, when a host persuades a guest to accept his offer, there can be 'violent' physical contact between the two. I use the term 'violent' or 'violence' to indicate the degree - rather than nature - of physical contact that I observed in the village. Let me temporarily define the notion 'violence' as 'physical interaction by force'. Using this definition, a large number of activities in the village can

be categorised as 'violent', though Zhao villagers may not refer to these actions as 'violent'. Below, I shall try to examine several ways Zhao villagers engage in 'violent' action on daily occasions, to investigate how they use their bodies as means of production of social relations and look at what are the consequences of engaging in this kind of practices.

Case 5.9 A polite persuasion

One day when I was wandering around Qifeng station, waiting for the train, I saw two young persons fighting with each other in front of a jeep. The two young persons belonged to a group of people who had been there for a long while, chatting with each other in a friendly manner. Some old persons of this group smoked and chatted together around the jeep. They were about ten metres away from me. All of a sudden, one young boy with a black hat caught another young man's hands tightly and pushed him back towards the car. The one whose hands were held became extremely red in the face. He tried to break away but did not succeed. The boy with the hat finally let the other go by throwing himself on the other boy from behind and trying to put something into the other boy's pocket. Two older men standing a few metres away smiled and continued their talking. After the boy with the hat had managed to put something into the other's pocket, he released his captive. As soon as the other boy was released, he sprung onto the boy with the hat, trying to give something back to him. I then saw that it was money. What might have happened was that the boy with the hat had bought a ticket for the other and the other may have given the money to one of the older men who was either the father or an uncle of the boy with the hat. The boy with the hat was trying to give the money back to the other, because it was impolite to take money from the person to whom one wanted to show hospitality. However, it turned out like a real fight. Both of them almost fell down by wrestling with each other, desperately trying to catch each other's hands and forcing them open to take the money. It caught everyone's eyes nearby. But people around seemed to be very calm and relaxed. I could not tell for a long while whether it was a real fight or not. The faces of both boys turned scarlet; they panted heavily. While fighting, they were arguing with each other extremely loudly. Finally, one of them, who had managed to give the money to the other, ran away. The boy left behind tried to catch him. Then one of the older men said to the boy, *"ju shi wo xiang"* (literally, 'that's fine').

Persuasion in the village can be so hard that it may cause physical damage. In order to be good hosts, Zhao villagers would try hard to persuade their guests to accept their offers. There is nothing uncomfortable for Zhao villagers to engage in 'violent' actions when a persuasion takes place. Here is another example.

Case 5.10 The invitation for a funeral feast

My host, Wanbin, and I went to a funeral in Yangjiahe, a neighbouring village, in February 1992. Wanbin had told me that the son of the dead person was his friend. Since one of the *zijiawu* brothers of Wanbin also went to visit Yangjiahe on the same day, Wanbin had arranged with his *zijiawu* brother to provide lunch for us in Yangjiahe. We went to Yangjiahe in the morning and, before we arrived, the funeral had already started. I looked on, chatted with other villagers, while taking some pictures. Wanbin tried to explain what was happening as the funeral proceeded. As on other social occasions, guests have to be offered at least one meal at funerals. Towards noon, the villagers coming for the funeral started to have their meals in turn. I was so excited by what was happening that I almost forgot to eat. However, Wanbin's *zijiawu* brother for some reason did not turn up to invite us for lunch. About one o'clock in the afternoon, one villager in his thirties, who was a *zijiawu* brother of the son of the dead person, came over to ask me to have lunch with the guests for the funeral and in the meantime there was another villager approaching Wanbin who was standing a few feet away from where I was. I was quite happy to join them, not only because I wanted to see how the funeral feast was arranged but because I had also suddenly started to feel hungry. Before I moved, I saw Wanbin refusing the offer. I started to feel hesitant by realising that Wanbin did not want to join the meal. I did not know the reason. The man who saw my hesitation went instead to Wanbin and told him that, if he did not join the feast, I would not go either. Two villagers from the funeral family started to persuade Wanbin to have lunch with the guests of the funeral. In the beginning, they just talked loudly but soon they raised their voices so loudly that everyone around could hear. While Wanbin was trying to argue that he could not eat with the guests, the two men started to pull his

arms. Wanbin tried to get rid of them by moving in the opposite direction. The two men became really excited then. They shouted to Wanbin, "Why not? Why should you? If you don't come to eat, my brother won't be happy!" I was ignored. Wanbin was not be able to walk away, since one of the two men, the slightly younger-looking one, suddenly held Wanbin by the waist, while the other one firmly caught Wanbin's collar. Wanbin was lifted by the man who held his waist and had to move towards the courtyard where the feast was in process. Not more than five metres after Wanbin was dragged towards the courtyard, he managed to cling to a tree. As soon as Wanbin's arms reached the tree, he stuck to it with both his arms around the tree like a drowned person who had suddenly found a piece of wood in the sea. The two men could not drag him any further, no matter how hard they tried. The two men still tried for a while and finally gave up. After this performance, the senior members of the family came twice to invite Wanbin to join the feast but peacefully. Wanbin refused. Finally, the son of the dead person, who was supposed to kneel down in front of the courtyard, came to ask Wanbin to join the feast. Wanbin refused again. Later on, on our way back to Dawa, I found out that one of Wanbin's pockets on his upper dress was split by the two men. Wanbin explained to me why we must not eat there. It was because we were not invited as formal guests. If we ate there, we would be laughed at by others. However, according to Wanbin, if the funeral family did not violently persuade us to join the feast, they would have been laughed at by the villagers.

It may not be justifiable to call this kind of action 'violence', because the term 'violence' assumes a sense of violation of other people's rights. Zhao villagers do not see actions of persuasion as inappropriate or violations of other people's rights. Instead, they believe that all possible means of persuasions should be employed by the host on certain occasions, otherwise the host may be 'laughed at' by others for not being polite. One implication is that, to Zhao villagers, 'violent' physical contact does not bear any essential cultural meaning. In other words, the uses of body contacts are not related to a certain kind of feelings or emotions, such as hatred or anger. There is no intrinsic characteristic that Zhao villagers attribute, as such, to violence. Rather, 'violence' can be used on different social occasions to construe different meanings.

* * *

'Violence' is also used in the village as a means of punishment, which is often applied by the senior to the junior, for instance, the father to his children or the school teacher to the pupils. In April and May 1992, I frequently visited the village school, trying to understand, partly as I had planned before my fieldwork, the social significance of schooling and literacy. The Xiang government organises certain celebrations each year for Children's Day, on the first of June. To celebrate Children's Day, each village school is supposed to prepare some performance, such as dancing or singing, by the pupils. Not everyone would have the chance to be selected but only a few lucky ones who are thought more clever or better looking than others are often chosen to perform. In Zhaojiahe, a team of four girls and four boys, who came from senior classes and were about ten to twelve years old, were chosen to prepare a dance which was designed by one of the female teachers at the village school. These girls and boys rehearsed every afternoon under the instruction of the young school teacher who was about twenty years old. The teacher, whose name was Caiyun, was pretty and had a very soft voice and an elegant way of speaking. I had talked to all teachers in the school including Caiyun who was very shy and timid. Most of the time, she did not speak much but just kept smiling. One afternoon, I was with some pupils in the school, talking to them while watching how these four girls and four boys were practising their performance. At one stage, the boys needed to bend their heads and raise their arms in a quite complicated way and, at the same time, they had to swirl. One boy, whom I knew very well

because he was from Dawa, could not properly raise his arm and, at the same time, swirl. The boy was a little slower than others. While watching, Caiyun was singing for them at a distance of about five metres away, imitating the music that the girls and boys would listen to on the first of June. After she saw the boy who could not get his movements right, Caiyun went straight to him and heavily slapped his head several times, shouting at him: "How can you be so stupid?" The boy screamed and tried to run away. However, Caiyun followed him and hit his shoulder. The boy fell on to the ground, but smiled back at his teacher.

Is this physical punishment? Zhao villagers seem to have different views about it. Once when I was having lunch with the teachers in a villager's house, the host of the family talked to one of the teachers, saying, "I give my child to you and want him to learn something. If he does not listen to what you tell him to do, beat him. My child is yours." One teacher once also said, "The village boys are not like urban ones. They do not listen to you. You have to slap them, otherwise there is no way to educate them." In fact, most of the pupils whom I had talked to were very keen on doing what their teachers told them to do. The pupils not only kept the school clean but also did most of the household chores for their teachers' dormitory such as carrying water for them.

The Xiang (township) government officials have made several announcements to prohibit physical punishment in the village schools. There was a guideline of principles for the village teachers, which was put on Caiyun's wall, saying that physical punishment was forbidden. However, no one seems to care about what has been written in the Xiang document which represents the official view of education. Both pupils and their teachers do not think that there is anything wrong with physical punishment.

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In terms of the degree and level of physical involvement and 'violence', there could be little difference between a village fight and, for instance, a host's persuasion as we saw earlier, but the motivation is different. Although, in a broad sense, all Zhao villagers are *zijiawu* brothers, village fights are one of the most common features of daily life in Zhaojiahe. In less than half a year from January to June 1992, I personally recorded five severe fights between Zhao villagers of different households.

Case 5.11 A village fight

One afternoon in March, since there had been a rain, all Dawa villagers went to their fields to carry out a shallow cultivation. I followed my host, Wanbin, to his field. I worked with a hoe, while Wanbin harnessed his plough with a cow. From a distance of about one hundred metres over the hill to the west two women's voices started to be heard, which sounded like a loud argument at the beginning and then quickly developed into a mixture of screaming and swearing. I could not hear clearly at the beginning; then I stopped my work and walked towards the direction from which the quarrel came. I stood in front of a higher level of the terraced field, listening. Because I did not bring my glasses with me - a big mistake - I was not be able to identify who was engaged in the quarrelling. Next to Wanbin's field, just one step up on the terrace, Xicai squatted, calmly talking to Wanbin about the weather. The quarrelling became louder and louder with the full force of obscene words. Two voices, like the terraced fields, rose higher and higher. At this moment one could hear them swearing, screaming and cursing each other's vagina. Two women stood in the middle of a little road on a hill, which led to fields, exchanging hostile words. The direct reason for this fight was that one of the women had not let the other pass through the road where she stood. As I was told later, the two families had not been getting along with each other for a couple of years. Although the two women's voices increased dramatically and

everyone could hear, no one showed any interest. The villagers in their own fields still laughed with each other and continued their own work. No one even raised his or her head to look at or try to look at what was happening. Xincai, the party secretary of the village, stood at a distance of about twenty metres on another road trying to talk to one of the women who was engaged in the fight. By then I knew one of them was Xincai's wife Maixiang. Maixiang, complying with her husband's requirement, finally left the hill but did not stop her shouting. The other woman kept shouting back from the top of the hill. When both Xincai and Maixiang left, the normal quietness was resumed.

Wanbin later told me that the other woman was Xicai's wife, Wenfang. The reason for the quarrel was that Wenfang deliberately blocked the road that Xincai and his wife needed to go through in order to reach their field in the end. Xincai and Maixiang had to turn around a big roundabout to get to their field. Afterwards Yin'ai, Wanbin's wife, commented on this by saying, "The road should be available for everyone, but Xicai does not let Xincai go through; if it were another person, there would have no problem". Wanbin told me that these two families had had conflicts before. Several years ago when the officials from the Xiang government came down to the village to collect cotton, Xicai had a quarrel with them because Xicai thought they had made mistakes, and had a fight with them. Xincai was the one who was in charge of the settlement. Xicai thought Xincai was in favour of those from the Xiang government.

In the evening both Wanbin and Wanyou made their comments, though separately. Wanbin said, "Xincai lost face this time. He is the party secretary. He has used his position and power to entrap *(keng-hai)* many good people. If he dared say anything, Xicai would have beaten him this afternoon. Maixiang was not as good as Wenfang at swearing because Maixiang went to high school and used to work in a town factory. Wenfang had only primary schooling. She is really good at obscenity". Wanyou's comment was from another angle: "If they had a fight, I am afraid that Xincai would probably not be a match for Xicai. To beat you is to beat you. In the countryside no body cares. To hurt someone, let him be fined, that is all. To beat him to death, nobody cares! Wenfang and Maixiang are relatives, though. Wenfang was introduced by Gengwu (Xincai's father) to Xicai, Wenfang's grandmother is a sister of Gengwu's father-in-law. Wenfang's father should call Gengwu's father-in-law 'uncle'. But this does not affect the relation between Xicai and Gencai who is Xincai's younger brother. Gencai does not like his family. When they divided the family, Gencai did not get enough. In the countryside the man and woman have one heart. Two men hate each other, so do their wives. Two women split, so do their husbands".

The story does not end here. In the evening Maixiang went to see the group head, Wancheng, to complain about it, but Wancheng went to talk to Wanyou about what he could do. Wanyou told him to let them fight, "why not"? Therefore, Wancheng did not even go to talk to Xicai. The following day the two women fought with each other violently and destroyed a good amount of wheat fields of different households. It developed even further from there. Afterwards, Xincai, who was the party secretary and maintained a good relationship with the local officials, went to the Xiang government in Leijiawa to bring back two policemen who took Xicai away. Xicai came back to the village later in the same day and discussed with others including Wanbin how to retaliate. They thought of using a large bag to cover Xincai's head in the night and beating him to death. However, no further actions had been taken when I was in the village.

Partly due to the fact that the village is formally accepted as a big *zijiawu* by Zhao villagers, family disputes are often initiated and carried out by women. As shown in the above example, although the actual dispute had been between Xicai and Xincai or, more precisely, between their two families, it was the wives who started quarrelling and brought the old scars to the surface. According to Zhao villagers, men are less likely to confront each other by engaging in cursing and swearing. Men would rather fight with each other. Before men start to fight, it is often women who initiate and act on behalf of their husbands.

The reason for a fight could be anything. Once, one villager beat his elder brother's wife, causing brain damage, just because it was said that she had left some garbage in an inappropriate place. Of course, as in many other cases, some villagers explained this fight by referring to a series of conflicts between the two brothers. Another severe fight that occurred when I was in the

village was simply because one woman gossiped about another. As usual, the gossip was passed on through another old woman to the other. Both women went to see the old woman who had passed on the gossip. Just after they left the old woman's house, the two women threw themselves at each other, falling to the ground, twisting and hurling. Many villagers came out to watch but no one tried to stop them. The two women, who were both in their late twenties or early thirties, fought with their hands and feet for more than twenty minutes. They had not stopped until their husbands came to separate them.

These fights can be dangerous. As I was told, two or three years ago, Yangkai's wife, Fenglan, fought with Jinchang's wife, Huanfang, because, it was said, Fenglan stole Huanfang's hens. Although Yangkai and Jinchang were blood brothers, their wives fought with each other in such a violent way that the tip of Huanfang's finger was bitten off by Fenglan. Both Fenglan and Huanfang's faces - I was told - were bleeding after the fight. Apart from applying their nails, both women tried to bite one another. Although the village fights could be dangerous, Zhao villagers have the ability to repair the damaged relationships quickly. For instance, when I was in the village, Fenglan and Huanfang behaved like normal sisters. No one could tell what happened between them two years ago.

The village fights among women are often solved by themselves. If it is a serious dispute between two families, particularly one that involves property division, the village committee has to be invited to help. If the village committee cannot handle the matter, the two sides will have to go to file a lawsuit in Leijiawa Xiang (township). The fights between Zhao villagers and the villagers from other villages in the neighbouring area will also have to be settled by the local government. Zhao villagers complained about the present procedure of settlement, which required those involved to pay a settlement fee no matter what result would be reached. Both the village committee and the local court in Leijiawa charged a settlement fee, which was set up only after 1985 when there was a series of national laws installed. Zhao villagers talked about this change with disgust. As they often said, "During Mao's time, peasants paid nothing to solve conflicts, but now they would ask you to pay before it is clear who is wrong. How can you ask people to pay before you make any decision?"

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On daily occasions, Zhao villagers swear and curse a great deal. Even greeting sometimes takes the form of swearing at each other. One sunny afternoon in February 1992, I went to the main village by myself. Since it was not long after the Chinese New Year's day, everyone in the village was still in new dresses. When I was walking around, trying to talk to people, I met an old woman who carried her little grandson whose age was no more than three or four. The little boy was dressed up in a new green suit designed like the People's Liberation Army's uniform, and he was wearing a brand new green hat with a red star in the middle. He looked so pretty that I bent over to say 'hello' to him. To my surprise, the little prince quietly said to me, "Fuck your mother". I was so embarrassed that I did not know whether I had done anything improper. The old woman slapped her grandson and told him, "No, you little fucking bastard! Don't say that to Teacher Liu. He is a fucking nice person".

One day when I was sitting in my host's courtyard, organising my notes from the previous day's visit to a funeral, the sun was shining and three small children played around in the yard, too. Lihui who was about ten, and her sister Lijuan, seven, and her little brother Yajun, one and half, were playing together. One of the duties of the elder sister was to look after her little sisters or brothers. Lihui was doing the baby-sitting. Yajun was climbing up and down on the steps to my room while Lihui and Lijuan were using my colour pens to draw pictures on their own. Both Lihui and Lijuan were sweet girls and both were very good at school since their father was a high school teacher in Leijiawa. I talked to both of them quite often and they were very friendly with me. I suddenly heard Lihui using all kinds of obscene words to nobody. When I looked up, I realised it was because her little brother had defecated in his own trousers. Lihui kept saying, "Fuck your mother, Oh, my mother. Fuck your mother". Lihui was not conscious of what she was saying but simply used the obscene words as expressions of astonishment and disappointment.

Zhao villagers seldom say anything without using obscene words. The great variation in obscenity is used as a means of expressing different kinds of feelings. Women tend to apply much more obscene words in their daily conversations than men do. Once one woman explained this to me, "Men do not need to swear, they will fight with each other if they have problems."

* * *

Various forms of physical contact are so far linked in discussion to the formation of social relationships. However, the body, which is taken as a means of social interaction, also serves as the main means of agricultural production. In Zhaojiahe, although it is an agricultural community which in many ways can be seen as 'traditional' in regard to the mode of production, daily topics of conversation are most commonly concerned with human relations. When Zhao villagers engage in agricultural or other kinds of activities (such as making steamed bread), they demonstrate great abilities in using and controlling their bodies. As I have shown in Chapter 4, Zhao women are able to use very simple, 'multiple-function' tools to produce varieties of steamed breads. Zhao villagers focus extensively on the distribution of economic and social relations. For instance, they are very careful about the way in which land should be divided between different households (see Chapter 7). In respect to agricultural production, they do not focus on efficiency or productivity; rather, they focus on the exercise of the body and the practice of the skills. They enjoy the art of combination of different skills of the body, which is what I call 'craftsmanship'. My argument is that the lack of interest in improvement of agricultural productivity is partly a result of an overwhelming concern with human relationships. A close inspection of how agricultural work is carried out will help us to understand how the life of the village is organised around human relationships.

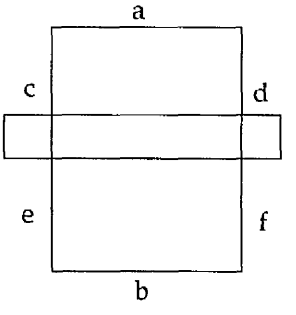
5.4.4 Craftsmanship

So far, we have not paid much attention to the way in which Zhao villagers carry out their daily work, such as harnessing draught animals. Since the 1980s, after land was redistributed to each household, Zhao villagers often worked in their own fields alone or simply with their partners. My interest here is not in how much they produce or, to put it in Marxist

terms, how the economic relations are distributed between households; rather, my interest is to show how Zhao villagers carry out each piece of work as creation rather than production (in this word's strict sense). Although Zhao villagers have engaged in the agricultural production for generations, it seems to me that they still treat each piece of daily work as a new experience. Let me illustrate my point by the following example.

Case 5.12 A carpenter at work

Zuncang, Wanbin's third son, had damaged one of the little wooden lids which were used to cover the burning tunnel of the bed. In Zhaojiahe, the brick bed is supposed to be warmed inside by burning wheat straw in the two bed tunnels which should be covered by the lids.[8] Because Zuncang did not know how to warm a bed, he actually burned the lid. The lid therefore needed to be repaired. Fortunately, the following day, one of Wanbin's nephews who was a carpenter came to the village from Heyang. It was the afternoon of the 7th of February in 1992 when the carpenter came into our room, carrying a piece of wood in order to make a new lid. The lid was about thirty inches long and twenty inches wide. The carpenter raised his right hand to me when he came into our room, showing a piece of plank which was supposed to be used for carving a new lid. I noticed that the carpenter had already nailed a handle on the plank. The plank looked like this:



After the carpenter came into the room, he took out his leather rolling scale but he did not measure the flue on the bed; instead he put the scale down and went to use the plank to try with the flue to see whether it fit. It took a long while for him to try it - it must have been more than ten minutes. And then he returned to his chair and sat down, starting to measure the plank with his scale. He turned the plank around several times and measured it from one angle to another. He then stopped to focus on the length of a-b. The length of a-b of the plank was measured more than five times. When he turned to his saw, I thought he would start to cut either 'a' or 'b', but instead he took a pencil resting on his left ear and drew some marks on 'd' and 'f'. To my puzzlement, he actually started to saw 'e'. It was difficult to saw since the saw, which was at least three feet long, was too big for this operation. The cross wooden bar, which had already been nailed on by himself before he started, made the operation more difficult. After a while, he laid the saw down and went out to take a plane and an axe. After the carpenter returned, he started to use the axe to cut the 'd' corner and then used the plane on 'c-e'. He then went to try the fitting. As he had done before, he did not use his scale on the flue but rather on the plank. He did not follow his own measurement. He repeatedly measured the plank and - it seemed to me - randomly chose one line to draw some marks, and started often from somewhere he had not made any marks. He had repeated the process till he came to 'a'. He cut some of the 'a' side and tried it on the flue. And then he turned to cut 'b'. There were complicated pattern of changes from one tool to another. After he finished sawing 'a' and 'b', he tried it again on the flue. It was still bigger than it should be. He went outside, applying the axe and plane on 'a' and 'b'. Every few seconds he came back to try it again. Throughout the whole process of work he neither spoke nor smoked.

I watched the whole operation and found it puzzling. For instance, if it causes difficulty for sawing, why does he have to fix the handle before the operation? Why does he not measure

[8]For a detailed description of the shape of the brick bed, see Chapter 2, Section 2.2.

the flue first and then draw lines on the wood? Why does he draw some lines on one side and start to saw another? This man is a well-known carpenter, well recognised among Zhao villagers. While working on the lid, he showed amazing skills in using different kinds of tools and a perplexing degree of proficiency. This is exactly the point that I want to make. It is the technique, the tactics, the experience, namely the craftsmanship itself that Zhao villagers take as a piece of work. It is not the result or the product; rather, it is the experience of doing, of making, of engaging, that Zhao villagers treat as 'work'. In this sense, every piece of work is new to Zhao villagers. This helps explain why, even when dealing with agricultural work which they have been doing for generations, Zhao villagers often hesitate and ask others to tell them how do it.

Case 5.13 Harnessing the draught animal

Draught animals are used for both transportation and agricultural production. When visiting a relative on social occasions such as weddings and funerals, Zhao villagers usually have to carry their mothers or grandmothers, who cannot ride a bicycle, on an animal cart. Donkeys, mules and cows are the most popular draught animals in the village. Most households in Zhaojiahe keep some kind of animals and, usually, a small wooden cart. Daily uses of the cart includes transportation of manure to the fields. Everyone in the village knows how to harness an animal cart. On the first of May 1992, when preparing to attend a wedding in Baocheng, Famin, who was in his early thirties and lived Nanjian, needed to have his donkey cart ready in the morning in order to carry his mother as well as others there. To harness the donkey to a small wooden cart was a piece of work that Famin had been doing all the time since the donkey-cart was the main means of transportation of the family. Famin said that he would have to use the cart at least every few days.

It was in the early morning. Zunxi, Famin's father's brother's son, and I, leaning on our bikes, talked to each other and watched Famin preparing the cart. Famin first took the donkey away from a pole where the donkey was held and led the donkey to where he had already laid the little cart. Famin then started to put on the reins, which were two long and thick ropes, to harness the donkey. The donkey was completely passive and moved slowly but immediately wherever Famin had dragged it to. However, after having dragged the donkey around from several different positions, Famin hesitated and looked perplexed, mumbling words half to himself and half to Zunxi: "This rope must be going this way, mustn't it? No, no, it could not be going this way. It should be going the other way". Famin tried first to make the rope go underneath the donkey and then took the rope away trying to make it go above the donkey. It looked as if he did not know how to do it. Zunxi was not a farmer but a senior *zijiawu* brother who did not know much about harnessing a donkey, but made some suggestions. Famin nodded his 'yes' and tried it again. "No, it was not this way, it could be the other way around". As a matter of fact, one side of the reins had been already fixed on to the cart, so there were not many other ways one could try. Famin turned the donkey to another position and tried the rope as he had done the first time. Famin did not remember whether the rope should first go underneath the donkey's belly or above its neck. Finally, he got it. It should go underneath the belly.

I need to stress the fact that this is not a single case. I observed many similar occasions on which Zhao villagers hesitated about what to do next, although the work they were doing was by no means new to them. With respect to using the draught animal, Wanbin, my host in Dawa, when he was preparing to go to the town, once did exactly the same as Famin had done. Both Famin and Wanbin were thought to be good farmers by other villagers, since both had done really well in their agricultural production in the past decade and both were thought to have stored a large amount of wheat.

It seems to be that no matter how many times one has done the same work, one will start it always as a new experience. This is the technology of craftsmanship. Anthropologists may have found that this technology exists in many 'traditional' societies; however, my point is that, firstly,

there is a close link between the way Zhao villagers engage in agricultural work and the way they carry out their daily practices, which are predominantly concerned with social relationships. In other words, the 'logic of practice' of Zhao villagers is applicable to both agricultural and social activities. Secondly, I shall suggest that, in order to understand the way in which Zhao villagers carry out their productive activities, agricultural in particular, one needs to examine in detail how Zhao villagers carry out their social activities on various daily occasions.

Discussion

This chapter has focused on several themes of everyday practices in the village, which characterise Zhao villagers as a particular group of Chinese peasants. There may be similarities, in many ways, between different peasant communities in their organisations of daily life. However, my purpose is to describe what means to be a Zhao villager in the early 1990s. As I have pointed out earlier, I see social actions and actors as being mutually constitutive. An inspection of everyday practices provides us knowledge about who Zhao villagers are and what they want to be.

When Zhao villagers act on daily occasions, they are first of all concerned with what other people will think about what they do. To justify their own action, Zhao villagers often refer to the phrase - 'other people would laugh at you if you did or if you did not do so'. 'Selfhood' (the inside) versus 'otherness' (the outside) provides a major cultural 'economics' that regulates social action. However, we must realise that, when Zhao villagers refer to that 'other people would laugh at you', they are not talking about an 'otherness' that is intrinsically different from the self. Rather, they are talking about a *situation* in which one should behave in a socially acceptable way. In other words, social norms are situation-specific and the ability to comply with these norms can only be obtained through practice.

Taking a comparative approach, Potter and Potter have provided an interesting account of how emotions are culturally constructed in rural China.[9] They focus on the relationship between the emotions of individuals and the formation of social relations. As they argue, in the west, social relationships, either personal or juridical or even fictive, are legitimised through individuals' experienced emotions; while in rural China, people do not see experienced emotions as relevant to the creation or perpetuation of social institutions of any kind. Emotion is not a rationale for social action:

> They certainly recognize the existence of emotions, and are aware of them as aspects of experience, but emotions are not thought of as significant in social relationships. An emotion is never the legitimizing rationale for any socially significant action, and there is no cultural theory that social structure rests on emotional basis, either real or fictive. ... Because they are assuming the existence of a continuous social order that requires no affirmation in inner emotional response, but only in behavior, there is no need for them to treat emotions as inherently important. ... The villagers assume that a person's significant characteristics are products of the social context, rather than derived from within; they are, in a word, sociocentric (Potter and Potter 1990: 182-183).

[9]My reference here is made to their book (1990). Chapter 9 'The cultural construction of emotion in rural Chinese social life' is based a piece of work published earlier by S. H. Potter.

There are two theses in Potter and Potter's account of cultural construction of emotion. A general thesis is about the cultural differences in constituting both notions of 'person' and society, while a specific thesis is about the construction of emotion in rural China. I shall deal with the second thesis in the following chapter. Here, let us focus on the notion of 'the Chinese peasant' that Potter and Potter describe in contrast to a western individual. Potter and Potter are right to point out that "the Chinese person exists in a web of social obligations and mutual responsibilities, rather than with clear boundaries that Western experience leads one to expect" (1990: 216). However, what they fail to show is the process in which this 'person' is made or constituted. In my view, a 'sociocentric' personality can only be obtained through the everyday practices, such as bargaining, greeting, fighting, punishing, persuading, and working.

As my materials suggest, there are two important characteristics in this process that produces a kind of 'person' through whom the process is reproduced. First, daily practices are the practices of differentiating people according to different situations. By engaging in socially recognised 'differentiating practices', Zhao villagers make sense of their social world. In other words, this is a world in which Zhao villagers produce and reproduce differences between *zijiawu* brothers, relatives, neighbours, friends, officials and so on. In order to claim to be equal brothers, Zhao villagers have to make differences between these brothers in the first place. In this way, I see Zhao villagers not simply as being webbed in a social network, but being active in making sense of this social world by constantly working on and reworking the existing relations in order to produce differences. Second, daily practices are situational practices. Social categories - the differences that are produced previously or on other occasions - are not fixed, unchangeable entities; rather, these categories are changing enterprises and can be defined only according to specific situations (cf. Fei 1992; Hamilton and Wang 1992). Potter and Potter are right to say that Chinese peasants are sociocentric, but this should not be understood as saying that Chinese peasants are passive products of their social world, for to say that one believes that one's personal feelings are not relevant to the creation or perpetuation of social institutions is different from asserting that one is passive in action. In the case of Zhaojiahe, the villagers often portray themselves as passive in order to exert power or produce certain effects on other people. Zhao villagers do not see themselves as being trapped in a social world of which they can only follow the orders; instead, they see both social relationships and institutions as alterable entities and they see themselves as being capable of building or changing these relations or institutions. It is in this sense that I argue that they are 'sociocentric'.

By engaging in differentiating and situational practices, Zhao villagers have developed a special capability of dealing with social formalities. This, in my view, is an important characteristic of life in the village. As we have seen in this chapter, by engaging in daily practices such as wall decoration, the travelling cinema or being polite and so on, Zhao villagers are able to act as social beings in the sense that they do not have to render personal feelings on certain social occasions. For instance, it is not unfitting for Zhao villagers to place the picture of a smiling, half-naked actress on a wall just above a 'remembrance altar' for a late father or husband. To put it in another way, Zhao villagers are able to act in certain ways without necessarily feeling

in particular ways. For instance, Zhao villagers have no problems in making promises which they do not mean to keep. They do not have to do things that they say they will do. What Zhao villagers mean depends on the context. In general, I argue that this ability of separating social requirement from personal feelings allows Zhao villagers to reiterate social obligations on formal occasions on the one hand and, on the other, leaves large spaces for individuals to make personal choices. Social values are reiterated formally and strenuously but individuals do not have to comply with what they have said or been told on these occasions.

After an examination of different kinds of emotions such as sorrow or anger, Potter and Potter go on to argue that emotions in rural China are taken as "natural phenomena without important symbolic significance for the maintenance and perpetuation of social relationships". For Chinese, "the critical symbolic dimension for the affirmation of relationships is work, and the related and subordinate concept of suffering, which is thought of as an intrinsic aspect of work. Both work and suffering are understood, not in terms of inner experience, but in terms of outward results, especially measurable ones" (1990: 189). It is true that Zhao villagers are concerned with the effects of their action rather than, so to speak, the 'inner experiences' of these actions. However, in the case of Zhaojiahe, it is not justifiable to argue that 'work and suffering' provide the affirmation of relationships. Unlike Zengbu villagers (Potter and Potter 1990), Zhao villagers do not talk about relationships in terms of 'work' or 'suffering'. Instead, relationships, as we have seen, can be talked about in different ways, for instance in terms of food. In my view, Potter and Potter sometimes mistake what the villagers *say* as what they *believe*.[10] As we have seen, what Zhao villagers say may not be what they believe - sometimes not even what they mean. To say something is an action that is addressed to a particular subject under a particular circumstance in order to produce an effect.

I have argued in this chapter that it is necessary to examine both what they say and what they do as practice. In the case of Zhaojiahe, it is food that is often used as a 'symbolic' means to affirm social relationships, for food can be exchanged or shared. Work can be shared but can hardly be exchanged, so it cannot be used for signifying relationships outside the household. In regard to the mode of production, I argue that 'work' is part of a set of everyday practices that are intrinsically social. Zhao villagers are 'craftsmen' of both social relations and agricultural work because the strategies employed for these two occasions are similar.

[10]For an anthropological critique of the notion 'belief', see Needham 1972.

Chapter 6 Celebrations - Weddings and Funerals

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have described a set of everyday practices that are central for an understanding of Zhao villagers and the life of the village. In particular, I have argued that everyday life in the village is about differentiating people according to different situations. With reference to Potter and Potter's argument, I have stressed that Zhao villagers are not 'sociocentric' in the sense that they are passive in action or trapped in a social network. Instead, Zhao villagers are 'sociocentric' in the sense that they are active in working on and reworking the existing social relationships. Zhao villagers see both social relationships and institutions as changeable enterprises. In this chapter, I shall examine the extent to which emotions or personal feelings should be understood as practices by looking at the village celebrations.

Potter and Potter have argued that emotions such as sorrow and anger, similar to those that are recognised in the west, are also recognised by Chinese peasants. However, the difference is that Chinese peasants do not see these emotions as relevant to the formation of social relationships or the progress of social institutions, and therefore these emotions can be displayed in public because nobody takes them as dangerous to the existing relationships. The exception is love. Love cannot be expressed openly because it imposes potential danger for the social structures embodied in family and society. Anger, for instance, can be displayed in public because "expressiveness is independent of, and implies nothing about, relationship" (1990: 187). Earlier, some scholars argued that, during the process of socialisation, Chinese people learnt to conceal their personal feelings because these feelings were thought of as 'shameful' to their families (Kleinman and Good 1985: 438; cf. Potter and Potter 1990: 188), or to 'devalue' these feelings in order to favour order and control (Solomon 1971: 60-67; cf. Potter and Potter 1990: 189).

Potter and Potter are right to say that emotions or personal feelings are not necessarily seen by Chinese villagers as essentially dangerous and these feelings - except for love - do not have to be concealed. They have argued that there is no direct correlation between the 'inner feeling' and the external social world in rural China. The 'inner feeling' has no symbolic power in the affirmation of social relationships.

Anthropologists may not feel entirely comfortable with the notion of the 'inner feeling' (see for instance Needham 1972). My question, however, is about how emotions are actually used and generated on particular social occasions for the purpose of producing certain effects towards particular groups of people. Potter and Potter's argument is interesting but they have not provided an account for the process in which certain types of emotions or personal feeling are generated and made, or, in their words, 'constructed', for a particular purpose. They have looked at the differences between the two 'forms of life' in terms of the articulation of emotions. In this chapter, by looking at the organisation and celebration of weddings and funerals, I shall examine

how emotions or personal feeling are applied by Zhao villagers on these occasions as social actions, and how these emotions and personal feeling are obtained through practice. I agree with the view that emotions and personal feeling constitute an important aspect of a 'person' (Potter and Potter 1990: 189; cf. Geertz 1973). This chapter continues to portray Zhao villagers as 'agents' in the sense that they are responsible for their own action.

* * *

In Zhaojiahe, the main forms of collective activities in the early 1990s are village celebrations, of which weddings and funerals are the most important. Both wedding and funeral celebrations had been abandoned during the radical years of the Maoist revolution and these two village celebrations re-emerged in Zhaojiahe after the early 1980s. According to Zhao villagers, the scale of these celebrations has been increasing since the 'agricultural responsibility system' was installed in 1981.[1] The collective economic operation was replaced by the household production, and alongside this change was a transformation of political organisation and control (see the following chapter). This change in the economic-political sphere of life allows Zhao villagers to re-work the village celebrations as the main form of collective activities, and they use these occasions to create and consolidate their networks of social relations. The village celebrations are occasions by which social relationships are transformed and reiterated.

The reason for discussing weddings and funerals together is that Zhao villagers do not separate these two social events. Both in a linguistic and in an organisational sense, weddings and funerals are taken as similar activities in the village. Apart from weddings and funerals, there is also another kind of celebration - the *shangliang*. *Shangliang* is a crucial moment in building a *yao* when the brick arched framework is completed. Close *zijiawu* and relatives may come for a simple celebration when a *shangliang* takes place. However, *shangliang* is by no means comparable with the other two celebrations in terms of either expenditure or performance.

* * *

I shall address two specific problems in this chapter. Firstly, I shall draw attention to the degree of violent physical contact that Zhao villagers apply on their wedding celebrations. Wedding celebrations include a series of performance and these performances can be 'violent'.[2] What are the cultural assumptions about body contact? How can these body contact be used to construe different meanings in different daily contexts? What are the implications of the uses of 'violence' at weddings? I argue that the intense degree of physical contact is used in the village as a means of celebration. There are no essential cultural meanings that Zhao villagers attribute to 'violence'. Certain forms of expressions may not correspond to specific types of emotions or personal feeling. Emotions are obtained through practice which is determined by varying situations.

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[1] In 1990, the village committee announced that those who spent extravagantly on weddings or funerals should be punished, but Zhao villagers ignored the announcement.

[2] Here I am using this term to indicate the intense degree of physical contact. As an urban educated Chinese, I was surprised by what I saw at Zhao weddings. This term 'violence' is used here to reflect the impression of a subjective ethnographer. For a general discussion of the presumed meaning of the term 'violence' in both English and its cross-cultural perspectives, see Riches 1986: 1-10. I am aware of the fact that the term 'violence' can mean very different things. For instance, Scheper-Huhges discussed the violence of everyday life in Brazil in terms of a 'political economy of the emotions' - how 'death without weeping' takes place as a strategy of survival (1992: esp. 400-445). For a discussion of violence as social action, see Hobart 1985.

The intense physical contact at weddings in Zhaojiahe provides a good example for us to reflect on the social significance of 'violence'. Some scholars may view this kind of action as 'ritual violence', but I am rather cautious of this usage for two reasons. Firstly, the term 'ritual' is not a term that Zhao villagers apply on such occasions, and they do not view wedding celebrations as 'rituals'. Rather, Zhao villagers talk about weddings as celebrations or 'things' (see below). Secondly, the English term 'ritual' presupposes a fixed routine, which is contrary to my intention of viewing wedding celebrations, which re-emerged under a specific historical condition, as changing practices. As Renato Rosaldo writes: "Ritual itself is defined by its formality and routine; under such descriptions, it more nearly resembles a recipe, a fixed program, or a book of etiquette than an open-ended human process" (1993: 12).

Secondly, I shall discuss how Zhao villagers are able to perform at funerals according to the social requirements without rendering their 'true' personal feelings. Zhao villagers literally *celebrate* a funeral and enjoy themselves with food and music. They do not have to show grief or other kinds of feelings that are commonly supposed to be associated with death and funerals. Funeral music is often joyful and delightful in order to entertain the guests. Zhao women's crying and wailing at funerals are not expressions of their personal feelings of, or emotional attachment to, the dead person, but are conducted according to instructions given by the funeral manager. I argue that, through practice, Zhao villagers obtain the ability to cope with certain social norms without necessarily rendering their 'true' feeling. In order to do so, Zhao villagers are always conscious of the situation in which an action takes place.

6.1 Weddings and Funerals as 'Things'

In Chinese, both weddings and funerals are often put together to be called *hong-bai-xi-shi.* The term *hong* and *bai* are two colour terms, red and white. The character *xi* is 'happy', while *shi* can be in this context translated as 'thing' or 'things'. Therefore, putting the four characters together creates 'red and white happy things'. The wedding is a 'red happy thing' which is often shortened to the 'red thing' *(hong-shi),* while the funeral is a 'white happy thing' which is often abbreviated to the 'white thing' *(bai-shi).*[3]

Zhao villagers use this phrase in an even more simplified form by referring weddings and funerals as just *shi* ('things'). When talking about either weddings or funerals, Zhao villagers will say, for example, 'X's family today *guo-shi.*' In its dictionary illustration, *guo* is 'to pass' or 'to live (a life)'. For instance, it is a common usage in Chinese to say *guo-ri-zi* (literally, 'to live the day'). In Zhaojiahe, *guoshi* ('to pass the thing') is used to indicate that there are weddings or funerals taking place. For instance, when I was in the village, I told my host's family and their neighbours of my intention to join some weddings and funerals. The villagers then started to ask each other: *Zhexiang nayao guoshi?* (literally, "whose families are planning to have weddings or

[3]A cultural assumption is that a natural death may be taken as a happy thing, which is not a 'happy thing' for individuals concerned but a 'happy' thing' for the family or household as a group, because, by the death of an elder, a family gains more economic strength as a whole.

funerals?). It is interesting to notice that weddings and funerals are talked about in daily conversations as if they are the same 'thing'.

In the sense that both weddings and funerals are organised as village celebrations, there are many similarities between the two, such as the organisation of the feast. Weddings and funerals are the same in the sense that they are given similar social functions which are in turn shown through the way in which they are organised. The characteristic of wedding and funeral celebration in Zhaojiahe is its public nature which means not only the involvement of different kinds of people and the occupation of the village's public squares or other public spaces but also, more importantly, the very necessity of exhibiting the celebration to others in order to demonstrate to the public what economic and social power a family owns.

It may be worth pointing out that the term *shi* is also applied often in another context of daily life in Zhaojiahe. That is, when Zhao villagers go to the township or town (i.e. outside the village) to seek help from their *zijiawu*, relatives, friends or acquaintances, they also use the term *shi*. For instance, if going to the town to talk to one's acquaintance, especially in the case that the acquaintance is asked to help, one would say, "I went to the town to *ban-shi*" (literally, 'to do things'). On occasions such as local officials come down to the village, Zhao villagers, when meeting them, would ask - where are you going to 'do things' or you are coming to our village to 'do things', aren't you? By applying the term *shi*, Zhao villagers refer to a public event which is outside either their own household or village. This is why it is often used in the context of encountering with others. The term also implies a sense of co-operation. A 'thing' is in nature of a social event so that it must be done by co-operation. Zhao villagers would not talk about their agricultural work as a 'thing', instead they would talk about their son's marriage as a 'thing' which needs to be done by way of co-operating with other members of the village.

Although weddings and funerals are both called 'things', there is another specific local term which is often applied when talking about funerals in the village - *mai-ren*. However, the term *mairen* (literally, 'burying a person') refers to the whole process of the funeral, which includes pre-funeral preparations and post-funeral activities, while *guoshi* often indicates only the funeral day. There is no specific, alternative local term which is applied to the wedding, though, sometimes, especially young villagers may turn to the mandarin term *jiehun* for reference to wedding. In general, most commonly, Zhao villagers refer to the wedding celebration as *guoshi*.

6.2 The 'Rites of Passage'

I attended several weddings and funerals when I was in the village. They were different in scale - some more elaborate and others less so. In order to present a well informed background for further discussions, I shall introduce two detailed ethnographic examples - one wedding and one funeral - in this section. These two examples may not be 'typical' but they were well situated because they were most extensively commented upon by the villagers in the following days after they took place.[4]

[4]Apart from my own direct experiences of weddings and funerals, I have recorded many other cases recalled by Zhao villagers in recent years. However, these two cases seem to present most of the crucial

Case 6.1 Honglu's wedding

11 February 1992

After breakfast, my host, Wanbin, came to see me in a new Mao-style blue suit and asked me the question with an unusual, big smile on his face: 'Are you ready'? I had been told several days ago that we would be going to join a wedding in Xipo, a neighbouring village about two or three kilometres away. The bridegroom was one of Wanbin's nephews,[5] that is Wanbin's father's brother's son's sister's son,[6] to be specific. The bridegroom's name was Honglu. He had joined the army two years ago and was living in a city in north China near Beijing. Honglu was back in his home village during the Chinese New Year's period[7] to visit his parents and was going to get married with a girl from another village nearby.

Soon, a horde of bicycles was on the road from Dawa. Family members from all eight zijiawu brothers of Wanbin hurried each other to start the journey. Men wore the brand new blue Mao suits while women, especially young women, were dressed in the traditional Chinese style in beautiful colours. Young people were all on bicycles. More than twenty bicycles jammed into the little picturesque dirt roads. They were followed by a slowly moving donkey-cart in which the elderly and mothers with their little babies sat. On the back seat of each bicycle, except mine, there was a pair of hanging baskets for carrying wedding presents. Apart from Yangkai, Jinkai and Jinchang[8] who carried more gifts than others, other villagers brought only a pair of *laohumo* (i.e. 'tiger bread'). On the top of each covered basket was a colourful home-made handkerchief.

Ridding carefully and slowly on the up-and-down little hill roads for forty minutes or so, we arrived at Xipo, a village which sat on a hill but was sometimes taken by Zhao villagers as a half *yuanshang* village. Honglu's *yuanzi* (courtyard) is in the north end of the village.

It was an ordinary *yuanzi* with three pieces of red posters on the yard-door. Chinese characters of blessing were written on these posters in golden letters. Into the yard there were also similar pieces of red paper painted with Chinese characters, such as 'newly-wedded auspiciousness', 'newly-wedded happiness' and so forth, on the walls. Inside, to the right side of the yard-door, there was a table set up for receiving gifts (see Figure 7). Two middle-aged villagers (the gift accountants) sat behind the table, making records on a notebook about what kind of gifts they received. If it was cash, the gift accountants would write down the exact amount they got. The recording was in such a detailed way that no single piece of gift, no matter how little it might be, would be left unnoticed. For instance, some neighbours of Honglu came to join the wedding feast by paying only 0.5 *yuan*. No villager would come to eat without presenting something and what they presented was accurately recorded. Inside Honglu's *yuanzi*, next to the gift receiving table, there was another table used as an exhibition platform, on which all gifts received would be laid on in order to exhibit them to the public. Behind the platform, leaning on to a window, together with bottles of spirits, were two pictures: Honglu's late grandfather and father.

On the wall above the exhibition table, all the names of those who were invited to help were written on a red paper which was called *zhi-shi-bu*. Those who helped to organise the wedding were divided into twelve categories: i) 'receiving gifts',[9] ii) 'greeting guests', iii) 'scooping gifts',[10] iv) 'serving the meal', v) 'carrying bread'. vi) 'bread kitchen', vii) 'tea kitchen', viii) 'serving tea', ix) 'serving kitchen' x) 'bringing water', xi) 'looking after ovens' xii) 'washing up'. Under each title, there were two or three names.

The inner part of the yard was divided into two halves, one for cooking and the other as a temporary dining hall. The temporary dining hall was built with a plastic roof supported by wooden poles. On the hall wall, there were traditional opera-figure paintings hanging down from

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characteristics that I would like to discuss and stress. A formal representation of the funeral celebration is given in Appendix 3.

[5]For a discussion of Wanbin's *zijiawu*, see Appendix 2.

[6]I use FBSS (father's brother's son's sister) to indicate that the daughter of FB is married out - in order to distinguish it from FBD (father's brother's daughter) which means that the daughter is unmarried (still living with her father). This is the logic that Zhao villagers explain these relationships. For instance, Wanbin will count Honglu's mother as Yangkai's sister but not as Wanbin's father's brother's daughter.

[7]The Chinese New Year's Day was on the 4th of February in 1992.

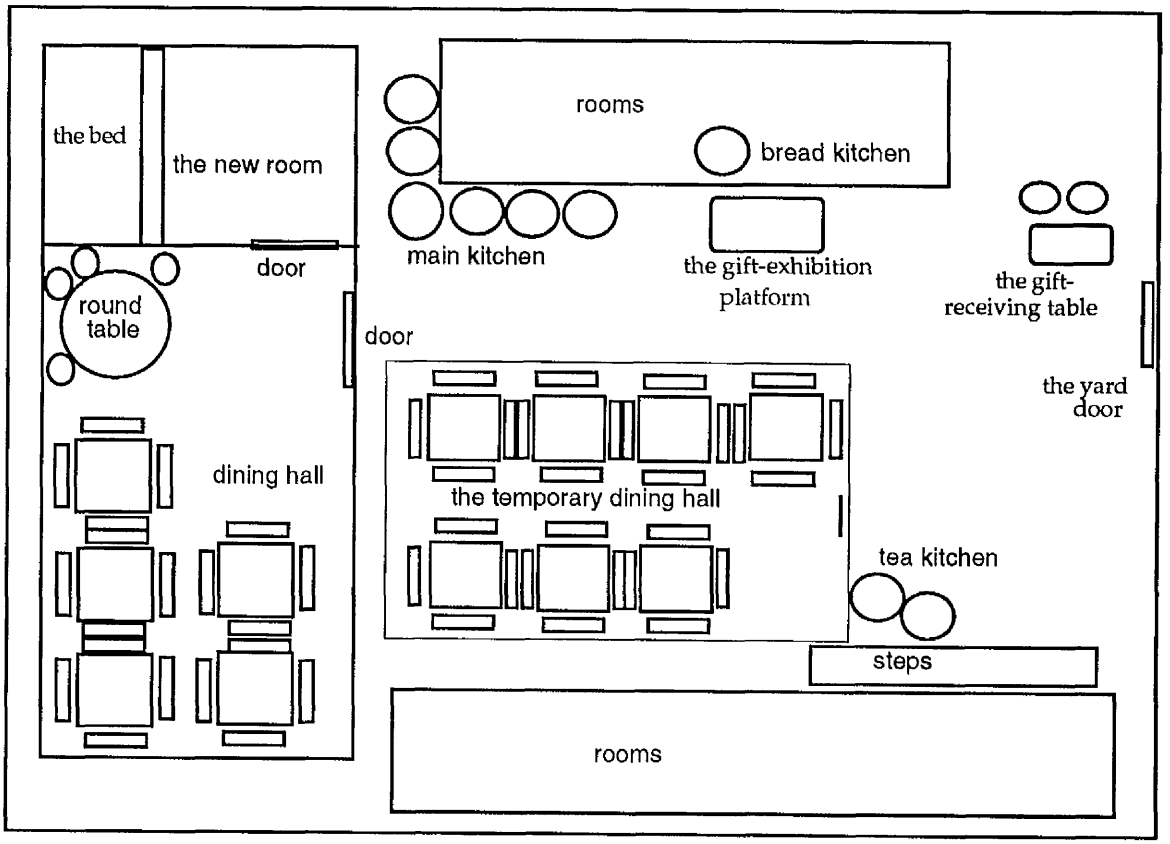
[8]Honglu's mother's brothers.

[9]In the cases of i), ii), iii), iv), v), viii), ix), x), xi), xii), it was used a verb rather than a noun to describe the job.

[10]The Chinese character used for this task is *tao*, which means to take things out of the basket.

the roof, and there were seven square tables set up in the temporary dining hall. To the end of the yard, there was a large room in which a small 'new room' (i.e. *xinfang)* was built and prepared for Honglu and his bride. There were five square tables and a round table in the large room which was also used as a dining space. In total there were twelve tables and each could be used to serve eight people at one time.

Figure 7. A Wedding Courtyard



When I followed Wanbin to come into Honglu's yard, immediately two villagers from Xipo greeted us and took away Wanbin's baskets. The tiger bread that Wanbin brought with him had then been put on the exhibition table for a while before it was taken away to the kitchen. We arrived fairly early, not yet many people appeared, and we were offered tea and cigarettes while sitting at a dining table in the large room. People came in and out, exchanging a few words with those whom they knew. About an hour later, around ten o'clock in the morning, a huge, heavy truck, which was prepared for transporting the bride and her dowry, arrived at the village, bringing a little stir of the crowd. Characters painted on both sides of the truck doors showed that the truck came from Chengcheng county. Later I was told that the truck was borrowed from the construction bureau of the county government by Honglu's Da-Bei, Wankai, who worked in the county town as a shop manager. The truck came to pick up the bridegroom and his company to go to the bride's village two kilometres away. This group of people are called *yin-qin-de* ('the greeting team'), which should include the bridegroom's father, his mother's elder brother and the best man. Honglu's father died some years ago and his mother remarried. However, Honglu's step-father did not join the greeting team. Instead, Wankai, Honglu's mother's elder brother, led the team. When the truck came to Xipo, the driver and members of the greeting team were served with lunch. Then the truck left Xipo.

After the truck left, the wedding feast started. People ate in turn in both dining halls. I was asked to sit at a corner table in the large dining room, together with Wanbin, Wanyou and others whom I did not know. There was no rule for seat arrangement; even little kids were allowed to occupy a seat. At our table, apart from a young, city-looking man, there were three women and a child who was no more than five or six. Quickly, nine cold dishes, although with not much food in each plate, as well as either tea or Chinese spirits, were served as the first course. Two of these nine dishes simply contained sugar, red and white. Each table was looked

after by a villager who was carrying a flagon of spirits. People at my table did not speak to each other much.

Adults ate very politely and gracefully. They did not even stretch their arms to reach for food on the other side of the table. They ate little by little from the nearest plates. In contrast, the child was desperate to get as much as he could. No one seemed to know whose this child was. The child finished his food fast and almost swallowed the whole plate of sugar, though there was not much in it anyway. Those who drank spirits stopped after two or three rounds of re-filling. Since the cup was very small, I thought they would continue to drink for a while but they did not. The villager who was in charge of re-filling did not even try to persuade people to drink more. Immediately after we said that we did not want to drink more, all plates were taken away. Hot dishes of food and steamed bread were than served. Nine hot dishes, which included meat, to-fu and vegetable dishes, were not brought on the table at once, but rather in turn. Two meat dishes were very fatty. The last dish was in fact a bowl of soup. There was only one spoon given which was supposed to be shared by all eight people. People drank the soup in turn. At my table, no one ate more than two pieces of steamed bread, but not less than two either. This rather surprised me: everyone ate exactly the same amount of bread! I suddenly realised I myself also said 'no' to the person who asked me whether I would like one more piece of bread. The age at the table ranged from five to sixty and there were both men and women, but they ate exactly the same amount. The point is that their stomachs are socially regulated. To eat less would be thought to be a 'loss' to those who are present, while to eat more than one should would not be consciously possible. I later thought that I could have eaten a little more in fact.

It took about half an hour before we finished everything. When we finished our meal and left the table, others took it. People ate in turn and the feast was still going on.

When I was wandering around in the village after the meal, about two o'clock in the afternoon, the truck came back to the village, attracting a crowd in front of Honglu's courtyard. A big Chinese character, Xi, meaning happiness, was put on the front window of the truck. Two rows of seats in the driver's cab were occupied by six people: the driver, the bride and the bridegroom in the first row and the best man and two bridesmaids in the second row. The dowry was piled up on the truck. Followed the truck came a huge coach full of the bride's *zijiawu* and relatives. When the coach arrived, it stayed away from Honglu's courtyard and people got off it and walked away.

The truck stopped right in front of Honglu's yard door. Although the bridegroom and the best man who was said to be Honglu's friend in the village immediately got off, the bride and her maids, one in her late twenties and the other in mid-thirties, refused to move. One side of the truck door was open and there was a crowd of more than a hundred on-looking villagers around, watching, clapping their hands, and shouting. Honglu and the best man stood very close to the truck door, smiling while arguing. Inside the truck, the three women looked calm but determined. As I was told, according to the local custom, bridesmaids should be given a certain amount of money before they get off the truck. Without her company, the bride refused to do anything. I was also told that money presented to the maids was often 'symbolic', sometimes as little as one or two *yuan*. However, in this case, the bridesmaids demanded fifty *yuan* for each, according to the best man.

Honglu, the bridegroom, leaned his body on the truck, talking mainly to the bride with a complicated facial expression which told nothing about what he was thinking. Little girls started to throw peas and pieces of millet straw, which were supposed to be thrown over the bride's head, onto the truck. The truck driver was unhappy about peas being thrown into his truck and tried to stop them. More people now gathered in front of the truck, some shouting at Honglu and others at the bride. One or two young villagers even started to throw pieces of clay and small stones into the truck, trying to hit the bride and her maids. Stones hitting the truck produced piercing sounds which tormented the truck driver whose face had already become purple. The bride was hit and tried to shut the truck door but failed. She shrank even further inside, without saying anything but looked disturbed. Then a baby of several months was passed to Honglu's arms. It was the baby of one of the maids. Honglu talked to the baby, "Tell your mother to get off the truck", though the baby was too little to make a speech. Honglu's step-father came to join the persuasion. No change took place except the crowd yelled increasingly louder. Finally, Wankai came with two red wrappings. Money was handed by Honglu to the maids but they still refused to get off, because they were given only one tenth of what they had demanded.

As a matter of fact, there had already been some money presented to the bridesmaids before the truck arrived at Xipo. After the second round of presentation of money to the maids, the crowd became impatient and angry. The bride smiled sweetly but stuck to her seat as if a piece of iron to a magnetic. Some from the back of the crowd shouted, 'Pull her out'! Some young

villagers, after hearing this suggestion, moved towards the truck and tried to offer some help to drag the bride off the truck but they were stopped by Wankai. Instead, the bride hid herself even further inside, close to the door on the other side of the truck. The best man, who looked desperate, suddenly opened the other door and caught the bride's left arm, and then pulled her off the truck. The bride tried to get back onto the truck but failed. The crowd occupied both door ways. Wa-a-a! A big applause was heard. The bride was flushed and tried to hide herself but there was nowhere she could turn to. All her relatives had disappeared as soon as they got off the coach and had been enjoying their tea somewhere since then. Wankai was also quickly out of sight. Kids and young villagers threw everything they were able to get hold of at the moment onto the bride's head, even big pieces of clay. In front of the hopeless and perplexed bride, stood the bridegroom giggling all the time. Firecrackers exploded around the bride's feet.

Resistance was, somehow, meaningless after the bride had been forced off the truck. The bridesmaids finally, very reluctantly, got off the truck. They were welcomed by firecrackers throwing into almost their pockets, which shocked them and made them very angry. The crowd applauded when a little boy tried to burn the bottom of one maid's trousers with a cigarette butt.

It took at least an hour to get the women off the truck.

The bride, for the first time in full view, looked stunning. She was in a red, loose cashmere coat with yellow, blue and purple rings on it and tight blue-red trousers beneath. An orange silk scarf was around her very fair neck in contrast with her shining dark hair combed behind neatly. She was wearing a pair of leather shoes of modern design. Her face, always smiling, was shining. In contrast, the bridegroom, pale and sweaty, was in his plain army uniform, all in green apart from a pair of black leather shoes. He was even wearing his army hat with a red star on it. He was dressed exactly like a soldier, if not in war.

No sooner had they got off the truck than the crowd moved to the yard door to make a 'flesh-wall'. The door leading to the courtyard was completely blocked. It was said to be a custom that the bride and the groom have to break through this blockage to get into the yard. The yard door is usually very small in the area, often impossible for two persons to pass at the same time. All the young people, twenty or so, had then already gathered in front of Honglu's yard door. Meanwhile, the bridegroom was encouraging the bride. Suddenly, with her hand in his, the bridegroom and bride quickly dashed towards the door, trying to break through, but they failed. The bridegroom and bride were forced to return to the truck to resume their breath, waiting for another try. Several minutes later, they dashed to the door again with such an energy and strength that they almost reached the door but they were pushed back violently. They literally fought with those who were in their way. It looked like a group wrestling. An old villager suddenly shouted, "The millet straw has not yet burned!'. And then there was a smoke rising from the burning on the ground. According to the local custom, when the bride and bridegroom step over the threshold, they must cross over a burning bundle of millet straw. It was the burning that helped them since it was in the middle of the door, which forced the 'flesh-wall' to move away a little. The couple succeeded with the help of both the burning straw and some other villagers who pushed them behind. The bride's cashmere was left with smears from sweaty hands and her beautiful scarf dropped down to the floor, torn. The groom's hat was flipped away and his uniform buttons were broken. The couple looked like the defeated after a fight.

After the bride and bridegroom came into the yard, they stopped, on their way to the large room, in front of the gift-exhibiting table in the yard and bowed to the bridegroom's late grandfather and father's pictures three times together. Hand in hand, they went into the large room in the end of the yard. To the right side of the large room was a small room which was prepared for the couple as the new room, that is, *xinfang*. The new room had been open to everyone to visit before the bride arrived, but now it was blocked by a thick rope and several huge locks on it. In order to open the door, one had to unlock all of the locks and untie the rope. One end of the rope was tied onto the hand of the door and the other end onto a window of the main room. There were several knots on the rope which were also locked. Without taking these locks away, there would be no way to relieve the rope, that is, there would be no way to open the new room's door. In the corner, two bridesmaids and the bride sat at the large round table, while the bridegroom, together with the best man, stood at the other side of the table, arguing and talking to them. There were about thirty people, mainly young villagers and children, surrounding the table in a half circle.

As I was told, this was also a local custom. Those who locked the door only opened it if they were given some kind of gift, possibly money, that they demanded. This time, it was the

bridesmaids who should present the gifts to those who had locked the door.[11] Around the table, both sides started another round of argument, concerning how much should be paid for one lock. The best man played a more active role than the bridegroom this time. First, he tried to persuade the bridesmaids to accept that it was their duty to provide certain gifts for the key holders. The bride and bridegroom were rather silent during the discussion; none of senior members of either side was present. The best man was busy, talking to the maids on the one hand and to the key holders on the other. Whenever, the maids refused to pay more, there was a rain of cigarette butts and small pieces of foodstuff over their heads. People laughed loudly when the maids were hurt. The bridesmaids, flushed and irritated, yelled back: "Who is throwing stones at me?!" Their yelling then brought more cigarette butts. It was winter but the best man looked as if he had been jogging in the tropics, and his voice was already gone. He negotiated, argued, demanded, begged, threatened and tried everything to everyone concerned. The bridegroom stood aside quietly as if the negotiation had little to do with him, making passes at the bride who sat there smiling, even, at the tossing cigarette butts.

A young man insisted that he would not open the door unless he got cash. He then asked for two *yuan* while pointing to two huge locks on the door. The best man, after a failed threat, took out some money from his pocket. No later his money was out of his pocket than it had already grasped by the young man who threw himself on the best man. As soon as the young man got the money, he ran away. Then others started to tell the best man that the young man did not have the key at all. Finally, despite fierce objections from the key holders, the best man agreed with what the maids suggested - two pieces of handkerchiefs would be given to each key holder. One maid went out to get some handkerchiefs. When she came back with handkerchiefs in her hand, no sooner had she walked into the room than a young villager jumped on her shoulders, tightly catching her hand and trying to take all the handkerchiefs away. Having seen this, everyone in the room went crazy. They all pounced on her so abruptly and heavily that she fell down to the floor. People were piled up on top of her. She tried to hold the handkerchiefs but it was impossible. She crashed down, touching the dirty surface of the floor. She had to give in. Some adult villagers who had been outside the room saw this wrestling and immediately jumped into the room and piled themselves on the top. A one or two years old baby was squashed down to the floor and started to scream but nobody cared. Arms of different people were twisted and legs were wrestled. They rolled from one corner to another within the room. The maid looked as if she was going to be torn apart, and she had to give away the handkerchiefs. A young villager got them! He fought his own way out and ran away quickly. There was still no key, though. The best man looked devastated.

The bridesmaid, the one who was thrown onto the floor, stood up and became so angry that she nodded to the other maid and left the room. The other maid also wanted to leave but she was stopped by the best man. The best man asked her to give some money to those key holders, and she had to do so. Small notes were then passed to each key holder after the two maids left. Although some kids still shouted for more, they had already no 'enemy' to fight against, probably no energy either.

When the new room's door was finally opened, the first ones to get in were those kids and teens. They dashed into the room, looking for nuts and dates which had been left on the table, chairs and the bed. After all nuts and dates were taken away, the couple came into the room and sat on the bed. The procedure of 'passing the threshold' ended.

While the bride was trying to get into her new room, her *zijiawu* and relatives started to enjoy their wedding feast with a completely different menu in the temporary dining hall. The feast held for those who were related to the bride was better, as I was told by Wanyou. It was then already late afternoon. We left Xipo around six, riding back to Dawa.

A wedding is supposed to be completed in three days. The wedding day is mainly organised around a wedding feast and the transportation of the bride from her natal family to the groom's home, that is, to their new room. The second day, the bridegroom will go to invite close *zijiawu* and relatives of the bride to come for an exclusive banquet at his courtyard. After this banquet the bride will follow her parents to go back to her natal house for a night. And the third day, the groom will go by himself to pick her up and bring her back to his house. The wedding is

[11] In fact, the locking happens both ways. When the truck went to the bride's village, before the bridegroom and his company left, their truck doors were also locked with ropes. They had to pay in order to leave.

finished then. Before we turn to further discussions of weddings, let us first look at an example of the funeral celebration.

Case 6.2 The Yangjiahe funeral

20 February 1992

With a terrible cold and skin allergy, I sat in my room, after getting up, looking at my notes, while I heard my host, Wanbin, calling me for breakfast. It was earlier than usual. At the breakfast table, I was told that there was a funeral in Yangjiahe, which Wanbin would like to accompany me to go to as an on-looker. The news was better in function than the aspirin I had just had, and my cold almost went away, although my nose was still blocked.

Yangjiahe, which is not far away from Dawa (see Map 7), is a small village. There were only twenty-two households in 1992, which were arranged in two rows of houses. The person who was going to organise the funeral was called Yang Mancang who was the only adopted son of the family. His father died three days ago.

When we arrived, there was already a crowd of on-lookers. In front of the courtyard door of Mancang, a reception area was set up. Beside the door there was a table on which a picture of Mancang's father was put. In front of the door there were six desks in a column, which were prepared for receiving gifts (see Figure 8). This process of receiving gifts is known in the area as *xing-men-he.* The Chinese character 'xing' is to 'carry out', while, as for the other two characters, Zhao villagers were not be able to explain what they stood for. As I proceed, I shall describe the process of *xingmenhe* in detail. However, it may be worth pointing out that it is not entirely appropriate to term this process of *xingmenhe* as simply 'receiving gifts' since the character *xing* indicates that this is a co-action which involves both those who present gifts and those who receive them. The desks used for *xingmenhe* were borrowed from the village school. In fact, all desks that Yangjiahe school held then were taken by Mancang for his *xingmenhe.* In front of the first desk, there was a large wreath on which there were two elegiac couplets of blessings. One said, 'Great virtue and value when you were alive' and the other said, 'Immortal and eternal when you are dead'. A crossing couplet said, "nothing more you could have done'. Some more wreaths were put on a wall on the left side of the yard door. On the other side of the village road in front of Mancang's door, there was a square table set up for musicians. A group of musicians was already there when we arrived.

Zijiawu and relatives of the dead person started to appear in the early morning. There were no distinctions made between guests from the man's side and the woman's side. Most guests came in animal carts on which *menhe,* that is the gifts prepared for the funeral, were stored. Guests were queuing in front of the desks. Several villagers helped guests remove their gifts onto the desks and display them. Some brought more gifts than others. When we arrived, there was a complete set of gifts *(zhengmenhe)* just laid on the desks.[12] On the first desk, there was a toy-like pig made of cloth; on each of its ears was clipped a five *yuan* note. Beside the pig was some incense and a box of candles. From the second desk onwards, different kinds of food were laid out.[13] As at a normal feast, there were cold dishes, hot dishes, cigarettes, wines and spirits. Apart from *huamo* ('flowery bread') particularly prepared for the funeral, fried bread was also presented. Those who helped to remove the gifts were rewarded with free cigarettes. While doing their work, young people were constantly smoking. Later on, I saw some guests had even brought canned fruits and other food bought from the town. However, most the guests had made the food themselves.

Apart from food, each guest would bring a piece of quilt which was hung on a rope in front of the yard door. There were about ten to twelve quilts in this funeral. These quilts were colourful and struck one's eyes from a distance.

The food brought by the guests would be displayed for about ten minutes and put back into baskets or chests in order to be carried into the yard. Every time a new *menhe* was displayed, the musicians would play loud music, while firecrackers were also fired. Mancang and his son, who were both in white, would kneel down in front of the desks to kowtow (touching their heads on the ground) when there was a new round of displaying of the gifts. Guests went to the table

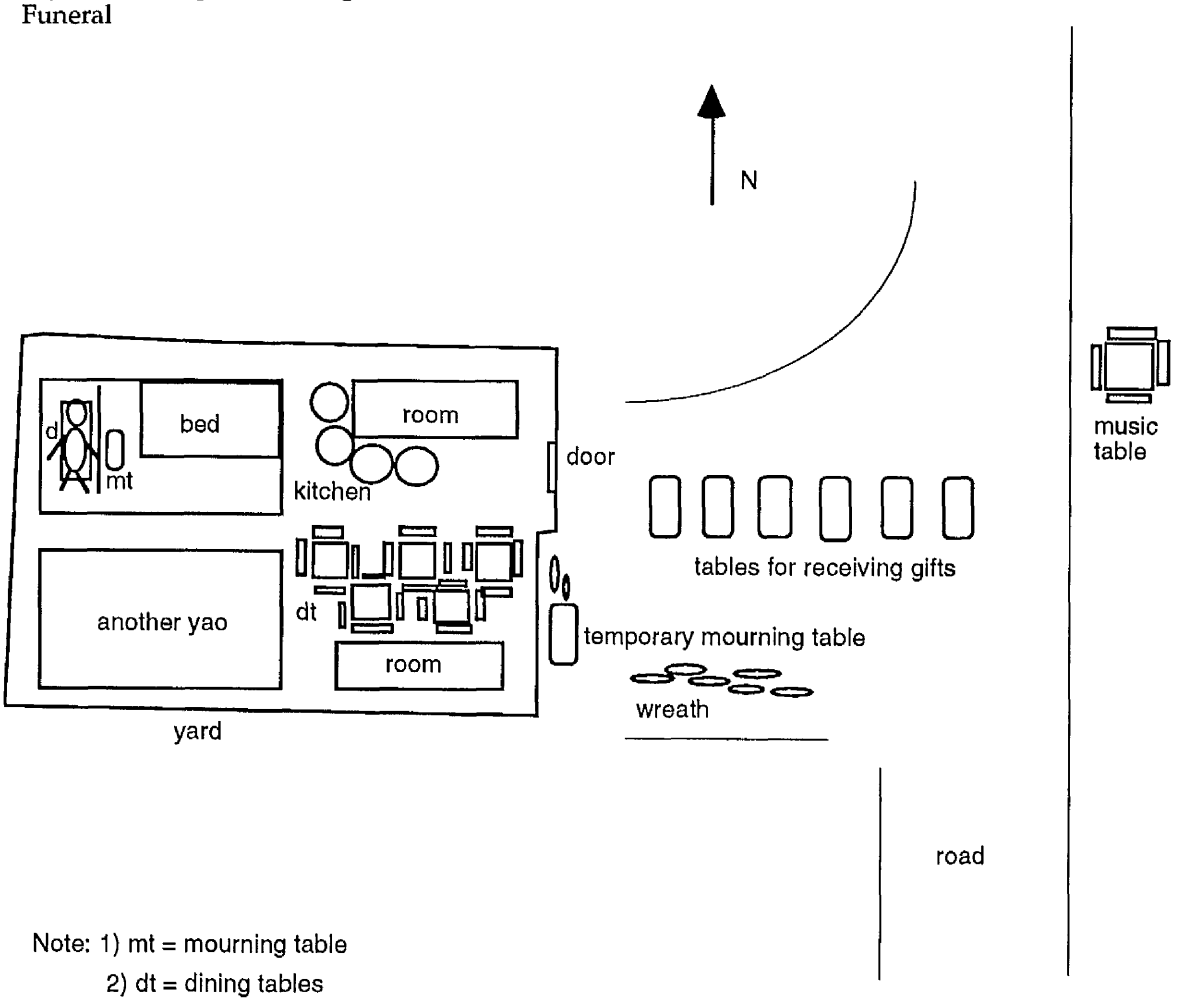
[12]For further discussion of the process of *xingmenhe,* see Appendix 3.

[13]For an interesting discussion of death, food and fertility in rural Taiwan, see Thompson 1988.

beside the door to bow to the picture of the dead person and burnt some incense, and then went into the yard to join the feast.

There was a temporary dining hall with a plastic roof set up on the right side of the yard. Opposite the dining hall was the funeral kitchen. There were two *yao* in Mancang's courtyard *(yuanzi)*. The one on the kitchen's side was used as a mourning hall (see Figure 8). Mancang's late father was left in the inner part of the house, demarcated by a plastic curtain. In front of the curtain there was a small table, on which there were four tiny plates containing four tiny pieces of 'flowery steamed bread' *(huamo)*. There were also an incense holder and four bowls of noodles.

Figure 8. The Spatial Arrangement of a Funeral



Note: 1) mt = mourning table
2) dt = dining tables
3) d= the dead

To my eyes, the way that the funeral feast was organised differs little from the way a wedding feast is supposed to be organised. The only difference is that guests are not categorised into two sides. People walked around, chatting with each other and making jokes as usual. About noon, the reception finished. The musicians were called in to have their meals. A little while later, a tall, strong and authoritative man asked people to go into the mourning hall to get ready for putting on their mourning dress. When I went into the mourning hall, there was already no space left. The whole room was occupied by people kneeling down on the ground, noisy but not too loud. A stir arose. The tall man, who later I knew was the brother of the dead person's mother, ordered to put on proper dresses of the funeral. Mancang and his son who had been in white suits and trousers then changed into white gowns which were long enough to cover their feet. Their shoes were also covered by white cloth and a long white strip was put on to their white hats. Their faces were covered with gauze kerchiefs. Mancang also put on two ribbons, one white and one brown, across his chest. Mancang's son was only given one grey ribbon. A group of male villagers helped Mancang and his son get dressed. After having completed their dressing, Mancang and his son were handed willow twigs to hold. There were small pieces of red and

yellow paper stuck to Mancang's son's willow twig. The very last step of dressing up for Mancang and his son was to put on a linen rope around their waists. The rope must be knotted at several places.

While others were helping Mancang and his son get dressed, *zijiawu* and relatives of the dead person also put on the mourning dresses. It was simple for men but complicated for women. Apart from Mancang and his son, whom were called *xiao-zi*, all other men, either *zijiawu* or relatives, did not change their dresses, usually black cotton padded jackets, but simply added a white armband. Some tied a linen rope around their waist. In contrast, all female relatives, far or close, changed their usual dresses into white and their faces were covered with gauze kerchiefs. Then some older women helped some young women wear bright colourful square scarves on top of their white handkerchief hats. I was told by a young villager that the colourful scarf was put on to symbolise that a mother help comb a daughter's hair.

After having dressed up, the tall man ordered a special round of paper burning. Everyone kneeled down and paper was burned on the mourning table. As soon as smoke was in the air, all the women started to wail. About two minutes later, the burning finished. Some women were still crying, but they immediately stopped after having heard the tall man saying: "My children, that is enough!"

Then, men moved forward and helped Mancang to carry the body of his father into a coffin which had been left there for a long time. Mancang first stretched his father's clothes. I was surprised to see that the body was covered by a red gown, which reminded me of the red flag often laid on top of the communist leaders when they were dead. Two mattresses - one from Mancang and the other from his son - were carefully laid at the bottom of the coffin, then the body was moved in, and followed by about twelve quilts on top of the dead body. These quilts came from the dead person's daughters and sisters. The coffin was not nailed and the cover was just put on it lightly.

When this was done, the coffin was left with the women in the house, while the men, following the musicians, went out of the room. About thirty people, including myself, walked very slowly towards the other end of the village. Mancang and his son, their arms held by two villagers, led the team. There was a small square on the other side of the village, where the paper was burnt while all of us were kneeling down. An obituary, on which there was a detailed description of the location and the shape of the grave, was put on to a wall which people passed by everyday. It was windy that day, so the obituary could not be stuck to the wall properly. Some villagers tried several times. But, still, before we left there, the obituary had already blown away by the wind. On the way of walking back to Mancang's courtyard, we stopped three times, kneeling down each time in the middle of the village road and knocking our heads on the ground lightly, wailing to a much lesser degree than the women had done in the mourning hall.

When we returned, some fifteen strong, young villagers firmly held the coffin and carried it out of the mourning hall. Everyone followed the coffin, trying to go outside while the women started to wail again. The door was too small for such a crowd to get out but it excited those who were carrying the coffin. Unlike at the wedding, nobody was trying to hold those young villagers back, so they had only a slight trouble getting the coffin out of the yard door - one side of the door-frame was in fact knocked off.

When I got out, I saw that a huge 'sedan' chair had already been set up in front of the yard door on the road, which had been occupied by the desks. It was called by Zhao villagers *jiao* (literally, 'sedan chair'). A *jiao* is made of iron frames which can be dismantled when not in use. These iron frames were covered with colourful cloth. The combination of colours was amazing: red, orange, blue, yellow, green, black, or anything startling, bristling and eye catching. This reminded me of how I mistook a funeral marching troop as a wedding ceremony when I saw a group of young people carrying a *jiao* on their shoulders, running and singing, on my way to the village two months ago. Maybe, partly due to the contrast to the yellow earth, the colour of the *jiao* was so impressive that it recurrently came into my mind when I closed my eyes.

A desk which had been used as one of the six desks for *xingmenhe* was set up in front of the *jiao* and on top of it there was a huge *huamo* ('flowery bread') with beautiful paper flowers stuck to it. While women spread around the *jiao*, wailing, the men went in turn to have a drink in front of the desk and then kneeled down to touch their heads to the ground in front of the *jiao*. In fact, they were not drinking the spirits they were offered; instead, they sprinkled the drink on the ground. Mancang and his son were the first to be asked to do so, and their *zijiawu* and relatives followed. About twenty men sprinkled the drink, and then the tall man asked loudly: "Anyone needs to *dian-jiao* (literally, 'to sacrifice to the chair')?" No one answered. It took quite a while for the men to sprinkle their drinks; some women stopped their wailing, looking around, and started to chat with each other.

An entertainment followed. Musicians moved to sit in front of the *jiao*, and started to play local opera. A middle aged woman, while playing small cymbals, was singing. The musicians were surrounded by the crowd with an excited enthusiasm. By this time all the women who had been left with the *jiao* also joined the crowd. Small children climbed onto their fathers or relative's shoulders, screaming when the singing woman suddenly raised her voice from a seemingly disappearing pitch which had been deliberately made to allure the audience's attention. When the woman finished her first song, the crowd became madly involved, insisting and yelling that she had to sing another one. This went on for quite a while. When the musician woman was finally released, a young drummer climbed on top of the desk, playing a big drum with such talent that made the audience laugh and applaud constantly. When the drummer finished with an unbelievable series of fast strokes, it was already late afternoon.

Finally, the *jiao* moved, carried by more than fifteen young men on their shoulders. Following the musicians who were walking in front, Mancang walked between the musicians and the coffin, while Mancang's son was just behind the coffin. The grave which, as I was told, had been chosen by a geomancer three days ago, was located on a hill behind the village. Roads were so narrow that, in order to carry such a heavy iron 'sedan chair' onto the hill, the carriers had to run. While running fast, some fell off the road. Dust splashed into the air, hiding the beautiful colours of the *jiao* in a mist of dirt, while the young carriers shouted and screamed loudly. The sky was clear, only a small piece of cloud sticking to a far corner; the whole scene looked picturesque and breathtakingly beautiful. I was not able to hold my breath when I tried to follow the *jiao*. The women were far behind, walking slowly in white and wailing in musical tones.

The grave had already been prepared before we arrived. It was a tunnel more than ten metres in depth. However, the opening on the ground looked - to my eyes - even smaller in size than the coffin. The coffin was passed down by releasing two thick ropes from both sides slowly. Then something was thrown out from the grave by a person who had been waiting underneath. By then two other villagers jumped into the grave to help to move the coffin into a small *yao* which was built underneath the grave. They spent a long time trying to locate the coffin, in order to fit into the direction as the geomancer had suggested. The door of the small *yao* was finally blocked by bricks. When the three villagers climbed up, others started to fill the grave in. By then a tractor which was carrying the old women, wreaths and paper flowers, arrived. After the burial was over, there was another round of paper burning. All villagers kneeled down in front of the new grave, wailing and yelling.

On the way back to the village, only one musician was playing, while others simply walked together with Yang villagers silently. Some women were still wailing when they walked back.

Later I met Wanbin who stayed with his friends in Yangjiahe. He smiled at me, asking: 'hungry?' I suddenly realised that I had not eaten anything the whole day. When we were heading back to Dawa, Wanbin asked another question which was more startling: "Did you notice what music they played?" "No, I am afraid not", I said. Wanbin smiled again, "They played 'Nothing on the earth is better than my mum'". Really? This is a pop song from a Taiwanese TV soap series recently accessible to the villagers through television.

The whole process of a funeral celebration involves many other preparations and organisations (see Appendix 3), and the funeral day is only one part of this process. For Zhao villagers, to recall what one should do can be significantly different from what one actually does at a funeral. This is the reason that it is necessary to provide an ethnographic example in detail. Reflecting on these two detailed examples, I will now elaborate my discussion of weddings and funerals by looking at their differences and similarities.

6.3 Aspects of the Wedding Celebration

6.3.1 Different aspects of the wedding celebration

There are several different but interrelated aspects of celebrations at weddings which are associated with different groups of participants. Let me first outline these different groups of villagers who participate at weddings. The most important groups of persons are the members of the two families involved: one (the bridegroom's side) as the host and the other (the bride's side) as the guest.[14] Not only the bridegroom and the bride but also their parents have special roles to play during the wedding. But the importance is to notice that the wedding is a collective and public activity which goes beyond the two families engaged. First of all, there is a kinship extension. That is, each side of the two families represents their own *zijiawu* and relatives. Guests from the two sides are both termed and treated differently. In contrast to kin, another category of participants is 'helpers' *(zhi-shi* or *bang-mang-de)* who are in charge of the wedding management (such as the preparation for the feast). This group of villagers are not linked with the family in close kin terms, and this is exactly the reason that they can be invited to help to organise the wedding, according to Zhao villagers. Another group of villagers are on-lookers who may not all join the feast, but they watch the process of performance. For Zhao villagers, a wedding is not only a celebration but also a spectacle. Or to put it in another way, it is a celebration only because it is a spectacle. A celebration has to be seen in public.

For these four different interest groups of participants, there are different aspects of celebrations at weddings. As far as the two families are concerned, one of the main tasks, performed by the couple, is to go through the 'rites of passage'. The bridegroom's family has to manage to transport the bride into her 'new room'. This includes, as Zhao villagers stressed, to manage to find a truck, a coach or even a car. In order to find a truck for their son's wedding, Zhao villagers always turn to their *zijiawu* or relatives or friends for help. There is no way one can find a truck by turning to commercial agents such as renting a car, so one has to rely on his networks of social relations, that is, on the people who have access to trucks or cars. People who have access to trucks or cars are often local officials who work in the township or the county government, because there were few who privately owned trucks or cars in the area. To Zhao villagers, one cannot separate a social relation from its practical usefulness, because these are taken as two sides of a coin.

Apart from the technical aspect of transportation, as we have seen in Honglu's case, the process of passing through the rites involves a series of symbolic encounters or blockages which are designed to prevent the bride from reaching her new room smoothly. As generally represented, Zhao villagers refer to three significant obstacles. Firstly, the bride and the bridegroom must pass the bridegroom's courtyard door together over a fire of a bundle of millet straw. They should be stopped forcefully by their own friends who would try every possible means to prevent the couple from reaching the door. Secondly, the couple are supposed to face

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[14]For a discussion of host versus guest as a dimension to construct social relations, see Chapter 4, Section 4.5.

problems when they try to enter their new room. The door to the new room is supposed to be locked. Everyone in the village has the right to lock the door in order to claim compensation for opening it up. Thirdly, after having entered the new room, the couple are supposed to fight their way to reach their bed - the final symbolic representation of marriage. Again, their friends will sit on their bed and try to push them away. Apart from these three steps of 'fighting their way' into the new room, either when the bridegroom tries to leave the village from which he takes his bride or when the bridegroom enters his own village with the bride, the bridegroom's vehicles, usually trucks these days, are supposed to be stopped by the on-lookers. The most common forms of blockage is to place a rope across a road in order to make the bridegroom's vehicle stop. By blocking the road which the bridegroom has to pass, any on-looker has the right to demand cigarettes or candies which are called *xi-yan* ('happy cigarettes') or *xi-tang* ('happy candies'). In this sense, one can say that the rites of passage are in fact 'rites of blockage' and the joy of the people derives from the very act of encountering, physical contact, and violence.

In an elegant essay which deals with the pattern and change of Chinese marriage ceremonies, Freedman wrote: "the Chinese rites of marriage are lengthy, elaborate, and dense with esoteric meaning" (1979: 261). By and large, this assertion may still hold true with regard to Zhaojiahe but it is no longer as 'meaningful' to Zhao villagers as it is to the scholars concerned, because, for the scholars, this sense of 'meaning' in marriage can be easily traced to the Chinese literary past and its mystic figures of whom no Zhao villagers in the early 1990s were aware. For instance, in the traditional *literary* language, marriage is often said to be made by the Old Man under the Moon *(yue-lao)* in Heaven (see for instance Freedman 1979: 261-262). This interpretation gives 'meaning' to a series of actions of marriage such as using eight characters for a geomancer to decide who good matches are.[15] In Zhaojiahe, the rites of marriage in a way remained 'lengthy' and 'elaborate' but the 'esoteric meaning' attaching to them was - if it ever existed - abandoned. Zhao villagers, either old or young, were unable to explain the meaning of the rite of stepping over the burning millet straw, for instance. As I shall argue, with specific reference to Zhaojiahe, what disappears at weddings is the literary hierarchy of meaning which used to be dominated by the village elites who had compiled genealogies and instructed the village ceremonies. To those elites the rites might have been meaningful, because they tried to interpret the process of marriage by producing symbols such as the burning of millet straw. What was left, after the encounter with the Maoist revolution, was a cut-off from that literary tradition and an increasing interest in a hierarchy of another kind - an emerging social and economic differentiation.[16]

If 'esoteric meaning' is stripped off from the rites of passage, what are the forces that manage to maintain the 'lengthy' and 'elaborate' forms of the wedding celebration of Zhao marriage? I argue that the revival of the village celebrations is part of a changing strategy in re-constituting the fields of social relations in post-reform rural China. On the one hand, the re-working of the 'rites of passage' reflects the historical change of the economic reforms in the

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[15]For an elaborate discussion of geomancy based on ethnographic materials from Taiwan, see Feuchtwang 1974.

[16]Croll has shown how, during the Maoist era, marriage choices in China shifted from the traditional pattern to a pattern based on a political hierarchy (1981). For my discussion of economic and social stratification in the village, see the following chapter.

wider social and economic milieu and, on the other, the 'rites of passage' in practice reinforce the economic and political conditions under which these rites re-emerged. The changes in the wider social context require Zhao villagers to modify their strategies and tactics in the practice of human relations, in order to gain economic competence and social power. In my view, weddings and funerals are, or have become, institutions of practice that help Zhao villagers to alter, modify and adjust their fields of social relations.

The second aspect of the wedding celebration is its feast. In the early 1990s, most weddings in the area took place in the bridegroom's courtyard in which a temporary dining hall was often installed. Guests are treated differently by being categorised into two groups at the feast: *huoke* and *xinke*. *Huoke* are those who are related to the bridegroom's family, either as his *zijiawu* or relatives; while *xinke* are those who are associated with the bride, either her *zijiawu* or relatives. The Chinese character *ke* is 'guest', while *xin* is 'new' and *huo* in this context may be translated as 'old' though its literal meaning is 'goods'.[17] This semantic difference reflects the differences that appear at the wedding feast in three aspects. First, *huoke* come to the wedding by themselves, while *xinke* are transported by means provided by the bridegroom's side. Trucks and coaches were the most popular means of transportation when I was in the village. In the *yuanshang* areas,[18] it was more likely to use cars for transportation of the bride, while in the *yuanxia* areas trucks were most popular in the early 1990s. Second, *huoke*, when attending the wedding, have to present gifts in order to join the feast, at least a pair of *huamo* ('flowery bread'), while *xinke* present nothing except for what the bride's family has prepared for her as 'dowry'. Third, *huoke* and *xinke* are served with significantly different kinds of food in terms of both quality and quantity. *Xinke*, who often eat later than *huoke*, will eat much better than their counterparts. I will discuss the specific arrangement of the wedding feast below.

The third aspect of the wedding celebration is its organisational aspect. A wedding involves a number of specialists who are invited by the bridegroom's family to help. As we have seen in the case of Honglu's wedding, there existed a long list of helpers *(zhishi)*. It is these helpers who are supposed to carry out all management work. Members from either the bridegroom's or the bride's family never engage in any practical arrangement at the wedding. The bridegroom's family are supposed to do nothing practical at the wedding. They are supposed to engage only in the ceremonial process. When I saw, at Honglu's wedding, that his step-father was doing nothing apart from giggling, I asked Wanyou, a villager from Dawa, whether the father was supposed to do anything at the wedding. Wanyou said to me: "What do you mean, things which are practical such as cooking? Are you crazy? How can one do anything oneself when one's family is marrying? Impossible!" The message is clear: all practical things have to be done by those who do not belong to the two families engaged. To my mind, it can also be read like this: the community will take charge of the wedding celebration. By the term 'community' I mean that the helpers have to be chosen locally but not directly related to the bridegroom's family in kin terms. As a matter of fact, the helpers are usually neighbours and most of them would come from the same

[17] I talked with Zhao villagers and asked them why they were called 'goods guests', they told me that they did not know what it meant but they had been using it for generations.

[18] *Yuanshang* and *yuanxia* are two local terms of describing, respectively, those who live on the plain and those who live in the valley. For a discussion of these two terms, see Chapter 1, Section 1.6.

village. As I was told, Honglu's step-father was in fact a popular *zhishi* of weddings and funerals in Xipo but he organised weddings for others instead of for himself or his son.

The most important management task is to organise the feast which involves not only the invitation of people but also the borrowing of cooking facilities. Both materials for establishing the temporary dining hall and cooking woks are borrowed from other members of the community. No family in the village can manage all the bowls and chopsticks needed. Everything has to be borrowed. Again, we can see the significance of social relations in village life. It is necessary to point out that there is a shifting emphasis in constituting a family's network of social relations in wider categories than kinship (see also Chapter 2 and 4). Regarding weddings and funerals, categories such as friends and neighbours are given a particular social significance. Zhao villagers cannot see themselves as 'individuals' who stand outside particular sets of social relationships which are, in turn, constituted by encountering their fellow members in various kinds of practices.

It is worth noting that it is the community which takes over the practical management of the wedding celebration, although the negotiation and choice of marriage partners are in hands of the two families. There are, in my view, practical functions for this arrangement. First, this allows *zijiawu* and relatives from both sides to have a chance to enhance their relationships with other people, particularly neighbours, in the community. Second, it also provides an opportunity for the community's members to be aware of the necessity of co-operation with each other and the extent to which people are interrelated within the village. This way of maintaining a sense of community solidarity through the wedding (as well as funeral) feast emerged only under the condition in which the people's commune was dissolved. It may not be justified to argue that the celebrations are collective activities aiming to keep the community united as a whole, but it certainly shows that, during the early 1990s in Zhaojiahe, they are the only means of celebrating the momentary solidarity of the village as a community. That is, Zhao villagers engage in activities at weddings and funerals to enhance their relations with other members of the community who are not necessarily closely linked through kin ties.

To the question of who is likely to be invited to help, the answer is often: anyone one feels friendly with. Let us take Wanyou as an example. Wanyou, as a cook, was often invited to be in charge of the kitchen when there was a wedding in Zhaojiahe or, even sometimes, in a neighbouring village. Although he admitted that everyone could be invited to join the team of *zhishi*, he also stressed the point that a few villagers were more likely to be invited than others, not only because they were specialists such as cooks but also because they were enthusiastic participants of community affairs. Wanyou said to me, he had good relationships with almost everyone in the village and this was why people would invite him to help. However, Wanyou's view of himself was refuted by many other villagers. For instance, as a close friend and a *zijiawu* brother, Wanbin denied what Wanyou said and openly looked down upon Wanyou. Wanbin did not, however, deny the fact that Wanyou was popular in the village. An underlying question here concerns two aspects of social relations - popularity and reputation. An observation, which we have already touched upon with respect to the role of matchmakers, is that Zhao villagers seem to devalue those who are active in or enthusiastic about community affairs, although they require

their services. In particular, this raises the question of how the village cadres are seen through public eyes. Zhao villagers often have a very negative view about those who are in charge of the village affairs, which suggests a possible connection between the way in which a matchmaker or a *zhishi* is viewed and a village cadre. The village cadres in Zhaojiahe were heavily criticised by ordinary villagers (see the following chapter).

Although Wanbin and Wanyou held different opinions, both emphasised the significance of maintaining good relationships with other members of the community who may not be linked closely by kin ties. This view of giving importance to maintaining friendship with others is even more widely supported by young villagers. In my view, it is an indication of a general transformation taking place in post-reform rural China. One crucial characteristic of this transformation, as seen through the case of Zhaojiahe, is its stress in re-organising the fields of social relations according to communal rather than kinship relations.

Finally, the wedding (as well as funeral) celebration takes the form of a spectacle. The whole process of the celebration is open and displayed in public. This process may in some way resemble what had been done in the past but, according to Zhao villagers, this necessity of producing a spectacle became increasingly important in the recent years - spectacle which is used to show one's economic power. This necessity is derived from the emerging economic differentiation and the increasing consciousness of this differentiation within the village. I argue that the wedding celebration is a social performance of - to use Durkheim's terminology - the 'collective consciousness'. The wedding celebration exhibits and produces social and economic power that demands to be identified. No further explanation is needed and everything becomes so clear that one need only look. Wedding or funeral gifts have to be received and displayed in public and Zhao villagers come to see *xingmenhe* in order to know the socio-economic status of their fellow members. In Zhaojiahe, if there are no on-lookers, there will be no celebration. Not only those who come from the same village but also people passing by or people from other villages will come to *watch* the wedding celebration.

As Zhao villagers tend to believe: the more the merrier. The celebrations in the past few years which were remembered most vividly were those which were 'big' *(da)* in scale. For instance, one of the biggest funerals that Zhao villagers talked about, when I was in the village, was Famin's father's funeral - more than six thousand people joined the feast. Neighbours - or everyone if in a small village - are always welcome to join the feast by donating a small amount of money. The amount of money will be recorded and returned in some way in the future, through paying it back at the donator's or sometimes his son's, weddings or funerals.

As we have seen, there are different aspects to the celebration of weddings in Zhaojiahe. To my mind, on the one hand, Zhao villagers seem to use the village celebration as a means to promote a kind of community solidarity under the new historical condition of the economic reforms and, on the other, they also use the celebration as a means to compete with each other (with their *zijiawu* brothers) by way of exhibiting economic and social power. This is the ambivalent character of the village celebration; this is why it turns into a public performance, a spectacle, in such an elaborate way.

6.3.2 The Wedding feast

In Zhaojiahe, the most significant feature of the wedding feast is that it is arranged according to principles which run counter to the way daily meals are served. Men and women, even small children, are all equally served at the feast. People are no longer distinguished in terms of sex, age or seniority but divided in terms of *huoke* and *xinke*. That is, at weddings, one is not taken as either male or female, old or young, senior or junior but rather seen in terms of one's relationship with the couple. *Huoke* are given different treatment from that of *xinke*. Within either group, particularly *huoke*, there is no rule in terms of table arrangement. This radically differs from the occasion of daily dining. Apart from a limited number of significant guests, for instance, the bride's parents, who are required to sit at particular tables together with other significant figures from the bridegroom's family, the feast seems to be presented as a free combination of random choices in terms of seating arrangements. This experience of freedom of choice of seats impressed me so much that it made me even more conscious of the strict rules of arrangement on daily occasions, especially when there was a guest present (see Chapter 4).

One implication is that, by allowing different kinds of practices in respect to the matters such as seating arrangements, Zhao villagers have demonstrated abilities to adjust their behaviour according to different circumstances. Zhao villagers do not hold on to certain principles that are essential and independent of context. Rather, they are always conscious of particular situations which they are encountering and adopt different practices accordingly. As we have seen at Honglu's wedding, no one at my table (including myself) ate more than two pieces of bread, since Zhao villagers believe that, as a guest, one should not eat as much as one likes. At weddings, one is no longer a male or female but a guest who is regulated by his or her social stomach.

From the host's point of view, the feast has to be prepared in certain ways. For instance, no matter what is contained in these plates, there must be two courses of dishes - cold dishes and hot dishes; and there must be nine plates for each course. As we have seen in the case of Honglu's wedding, some plates contained simply sugar. They have to appear on the table to make the number of plates required acceptable, although they can hardly be called a dish. I shall discuss the problem of maintaining the formalities in further detail below.

The wedding feast takes at least a whole day to be completed. People come, talk to each other, enjoy themselves with food they do not eat on daily occasions. For ordinary *huoke* and *xinke*, there is only one meal served at a wedding.

6.3.3 Wedding and 'violence'

In the last chapter, I discussed violence in daily life in the village and suggested that there existed a different understanding and evaluation of physical contact in Zhaojiahe. A discussion of 'violence' at weddings will help us understand the relationship between uses of violence and its social functions. Underlying this there is a question of the extent to which emotion is socially constructed. This will in turn lead us to consider how violence constitutes a necessary part of village life and the extent to which it is constituted in various forms of practice. Let us first have a look at another example of the wedding celebration from a neighbouring village.

Case 6.3 The Baocheng wedding

1 May 1992

Baocheng is a *yuanshang* village in the same township. I was told by Zunxi, my second host in the village, that his sister's husband's sister's son was going to get married in a couple of days. Zunxi said to me, 'you could widen your knowledge by observing a marriage in *yuanshang*'. What he meant was that the family of his relative was much better-off than Zhao villagers since all the members of his relative's family worked in either towns or cities. The first difference that I noticed was that, instead of using a truck, a series of cars were used for transporting the bride to Baocheng. Baocheng was a big village; there had been a crowd of more than four or five hundred people gathering in front of the bridegroom's courtyard door before the cars arrived.

When the bride and the bridegroom got out of the car, firecrackers were set off and millet straw were burned in front of the yard door. The best man, after getting out of the car, tossed several handfuls of sweets and cigarettes over his head. The crowd went mad immediately after this. The villagers jumped as high as possible trying to catch the sweets and cigarettes in the air. When they failed, they threw themselves to the ground, searching for the pieces of sweets and cigarettes. To me, it was a mess because people pounced on each other, trying to grab a piece of sweet from another person's hands. Those who had already got something were lying on the ground with their faces downward, while people who did not get anything were holding others underneath their bodies and trying to grab a piece of sweet from other people's hands. Most of the cigarettes were already smashed but those on the top were still pressing.

When people finally started to enjoy the smashed cigarettes or sweets, all of a sudden, a screaming rent the air. No sooner had I turned my head around than I saw an amazing scene: an old woman tightly grabbed another by her waist, madly kissing her all over her face. They were both over sixty, looking quite healthy. The one who was kissing the other had a pair of bound feet, very small, which indicated that her marriage must have taken place before 1949. What happened? Then, I realised, the woman with the bound feet, after having successfully seized a piece of sweet, was attacked from behind by the other woman who had managed to put a great amount of red lipstick on the cheeks of the bound-feet woman. The crowd stopped fighting for sweets or cigarettes, bursting into roaring laughter when they saw an old woman wearing a red make-up all over her face. The woman with red lipstick on her face immediately retaliated. She ran after the woman who did this, grabbing her tightly and kissing her violently in order to try to remove lipstick by rubbing it on the other woman's face. The other woman was desperately trying to get away, but she could not. The two women were pushing and pulling each other violently, they stumbled, and both fell on the ground. Lipstick plus the dirt on the ground were everywhere on their faces and clothes. They were both wearing traditional black suits, rolling quickly from one corner to another, once they stopped at the bride's feet, just beside a pair of shining high heels. The crowd went crazy and no villager seemed to pay any attention to the beautiful, gold-covered bride any more. The applause from the crowd made the sound of firecrackers seemingly remote and like soft music. Getting more excited, the two old women then tried to tear each other's clothes off. The woman with the bound feet tore off two of the other woman's buttons, but unfortunately her own trousers had a triangle tear from a tree branch beside the road. A piece of her underpants was seen by the people around! They ran away after this.

After the two old women ran away, the crowd immediately gathered in front of the bridegroom's yard door, watching how the bride was able to get into it. A group of young villagers, all in their early twenties, stood in front of the door, looking ferocious. One with a scar on his right cheek rested his hands on his waist and shouted to the new couple with abhorrence: "You fucking bastard, you want to get through this door today? Fuck your mother! I have been your friend all the time but not fucking today! You fucking (mother) try to go through here, idiot!" While yelling at the bridegroom and the bride who kept a sweet smile all the time, the young man with a scar also threw beans and small pieces of millet straw onto the couple's faces in such a violent way that the bride had to cover her face with both of her arms. When the couple tried to get through the door, they were stopped and forced back. Pushing and pulling were so violent that it looked like a real fight. The couple became more vigorous after several failures. Once the bride even crossed the threshold but she was pulled back by several hands on her collar. A huge flower that the bride was wearing fell off from her red jacket. It was very difficult to get through the bridegroom's door...

This is only one part of the wedding scene. It is worth noting that old women in the village are normally quiet and they would seldom raise their voices towards other adults. Within a household, the grandmother often waits for others to speak or act first. Neither do friends shout obscene words at each other on daily occasions.

The English word 'violence' may be misleading, since this word invokes a connotation of violation of other people's rights. There is no general term for Zhao villagers to talk about violent physical contact on various daily occasions. In terms of the intensity of physical contact and the way in which they are conducted, there is little difference among different kinds of the uses of violence.[19] On these different social occasions, as I shall argue, violent physical contact does not assume a similar meaning but is used to produce different effects (see below).

I have no space to document in detail what happened in the past with regard to violence but I would like to recall some key comments that Zhao villagers made about the matter in order to try to outline the historical change. As an old villager once told me, during the pre-communist period, there used to be many group fights within the village. Zhaojiahe is divided by a huge ditch into two halves. Zhao villagers live on both sides of the ditch. In the past, as I was told, the villagers from the two sides often fought with each other. As the old villager said, big clubs used to be prepared behind the door of each household. When there was a quarrel between villagers from the two sides of the ditch, it often quickly developed into a group fight, and everyone would pick up his own club and join. I asked what was the reason that Zhao villagers fought frequently in the past, this villager said to me, "There was nothing. We just liked it. No matter how trivial a quarrel was, we developed it and made it a big fight. By then, when there was a fight, everyone would join. It was simply for fun." Another villager said to me on another occasions, "No, there is no particular reason. We do not have much to do. Sometimes, we fight."

I want to stress the point that Zhao villagers do not talk about these fights as something related to real disputes. They talked about these fights as if they were entertainment. Anthropologists have shown that, both in south-east China and Africa, conflicts between segments are common features of the lineage villages.[20] In the case of Zhaojiahe, one may infer that there existed strong segments in the village during the pre-communist period and these segments were the frames of reference and the instruments of carrying out collective violence.

The situation changed during the period of the Maoist revolution. When talking about this period, Zhao villagers, particularly the village cadres and ex-cadres, often talked about how violence was used as an effective means of punishment to the 'class enemies' or 'bad categories'[21]. As an ex-party secretary said to me, in the past the village organised a group of young, strong villagers into a village militia in order to 'repress' the 'bad categories' (of people). As I was told, the village committee often organised mass meetings. And the 'bad categories' were forced to

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[19]For a discussion of violence on daily occasions, see the previous chapter.

[20]This kind of situation in which villagers from different segments fight with each other while they unite into larger groups such as lineages or villages in order to fight with other lineages or villages has been discussed, for instance, by Evans-Pritchard with reference to Nuer and Freedman to south-east China. See Evans-Pritchard 1969 (orig. 1940); Freedman 1958: 110-111, 1966: 106-117. For a discussion of intra-lineage hostility, see also Baker 1979: 149-152.

[21]Revolutionary terminology. For a discussion of how these categories were applied in mass campaigns and political struggles, see Chan (et al.) 1984: 19-22.

wear dirty clothes and paper hats, and were beaten. When telling this story to me, the ex-village cadre was trying to convince me that, in the Maoist past, there were more efficient ways to install order in the village. He might have exaggerated the function of physical punishment. However, what he confirmed was the fact that, during the Maoist revolution, collective violence was organised and legitimised.[22] The people's commune was dismantled in 1981 in Zhaojiahe. The village committee was left little power and there was no longer mass campaign and movement after the early 1980s. At the same time, the village celebrations such as weddings and funerals returned to the village. I suggest that these celebrations are becoming new instruments of collective violence. The point is that violent physical contact at weddings is at the same time an instrument of celebration and happiness.

Earlier, Freedman made the point that uses of firecrackers and other kind of noises at Chinese weddings were meant to purify. As he wrote: "Noise is used as marker... The marker is, so to say, neutral. But noise, as a symbol, can be linked to light and fire; crackers are all three. Noise and fire are purifiers. Noise and bright light are signs of joy" (1979: 266-267). In the case of Zhaojiahe and during the post-reform period, firecrackers are not linked, not in the case of Zhaojiahe at least, to purification but to excitement which enhances violent physical contact. Noise and bright light are not only signs of joy but also signs of violence.

6.4 Aspects of the Funeral Celebration

6.4.1 Differences between funerals and weddings

Although both weddings and funerals are talked about similarly in Zhaojiahe, Zhao villagers maintain that there is a significant difference between them. Zhao villagers tend to think that funerals can be organised on a larger scale than weddings. One evening in February of 1992, when I was chatting with my host about the village celebrations, Wanbin told me, "The funeral is always 'bigger' *(da)* than the wedding, because, at a funeral, you have musicians; you can even have two groups of musicians. You can also invite local opera to come to perform at funerals but not at weddings. The funeral is bigger". "Why don't people do more at weddings?" I asked. "No, you can't do more. At a wedding, what you can do is very limited. It is just a few things that you can do. But at funerals it is different. You can expand the celebration greatly. Some people present a film for the village after their funeral. No one does this at weddings. It is always the same for the wedding celebration but, for a funeral, there are great variations".

Why is there more entertainment at funerals? First, in terms of gift presentation *(xingmenhe),* Zhao villagers make the funeral the most elaborate form of exhibition. It is the funeral celebration that shows, demonstrates, and exposes one's economic power and power of social relations. In contrast, at weddings, the focus is rather on the rites of transition, the passage through which the bride and the bridegroom are able to become a new couple. Although Zhao villagers do also present gifts at weddings, it is to a much lesser degree. For instance, if one's daughter's husband's father died, one will need to bring new clothes for one's daughter's children

[22]For a discussion of rural violence in mainland China from the perspective of 'changing interaction between state policy and local structure', see Perry 1985.

as gifts. This is because, according to Zhao villagers, relatives have to show their wealth and power at funerals. Gift presentation at a funeral has a different objective from that at a wedding. At weddings, gifts are presented to the new couple, while at funerals gifts are presented as an indication of social and economic power. For this reason, gift presentation at funerals is much more formal and elaborate. Second, there is a difference between a wedding and a funeral in terms of the role of kin participation. At weddings, *xinke*, those who come from the bride's side, are guests who are supposed to be entertained; while at funerals, *weijia*, those from the dead person's mother or wife's family, are hosts in the sense that they manage the celebration. *Weijia* control, manage and administer the funeral.

The funeral celebration re-emerged in Zhaojiahe after the early 1980s, and the scale of funerals has been increasing since then. In 1990, the village committee, following the examples of other villages, published an announcement, aiming to restrict the scale of funeral celebrations. According to the committee, the village celebrations were wasting Zhao villagers' money and bringing them into debt. However, no one in the village followed the advice and the scale of funeral celebrations expanded even faster in the early 1990s. When talking about the reason why Zhao villagers need to spend more and more money on funerals, Zhao villagers often stressed the point that a funeral was not prepared for the dead but rather for the living. As Wanyou once said to me, "Look at those funerals. Extravagant. When their parents were alive, they were treated badly. Their parents probably had no quilt when they were alive. However, when they died, they were given so many quilts that they did not need any more. This is a waste. A funeral is not prepared for their parents, the dead, but prepared for their sons, the living. Those who make big funeral celebrations want to show to other people that they are well-off. Particularly those who have unmarried sons, they always make a funeral extravagant. Otherwise, their sons will not be able to get wives."

Slightly different from a wedding as a spectacle, a funeral is more like an exhibition, a display or an ostentation. In Zhaojiahe, a funeral is made to be seen, to be looked on, to be watched, to be observed, and to be commented upon. In a way, I see a Zhao wedding as being carried out like a narrative, which unfolds according to different moments of its transitions. As in theatre, the plot in the first act is a prelude to the second. Actions, - at least in the conventional theatre - are organised in sequences with which meanings are construed. Earlier action has relevance and purposes for later ones. Unless one finishes watching the whole play, one will not be able to comprehend the beginning completely. In a Zhao wedding, as soon as the reception truck (used for transporting the bride) starts to move, a series of actions have already been implied. The bride and bridegroom have to pass a series of obstacles. Each obstacle leads to another. The bride and bridegroom are acting as heroes who have to overcome the obstacles and are able to reach their destiny - the bed in their new room. At weddings, Zhao villagers wait to see how this series of actions will 'unfold', one by one, in what way, and how excited the end would be.

In my eyes, the significant events at funerals are not organised according to a sequence, though things have to be done step by step. It is like a concert, a symphony orchestra: everything is on the stage from the beginning to the end. Unlike weddings, every act at the funeral

celebration is not a prelude and clue to the next but rather an exhaustion of itself. For instance, at weddings, quilts as dowry may have been laid on a bench in the bridegroom's yard, while, at funerals, quilts and mattresses presented have to be exhibited in public, that is, outside of one's yard, from the beginning to the end of the celebration. These quilts, often put on a rope, are supposed to be touched and to be commented upon by others. At weddings the audience follow the couple, while, at funerals, people always stay outside the house - in front of the yard-door - in order to watch. Everything, such as music, *xingmenhe, dianjiao,* etc. is all displayed and carried out outside the yard door at funerals (see Figure 7 and 8, and compare them).

Finally, at weddings, all preparation and organisation of the feast are done by *zhishi* (the helpers), while, at funerals, the key role of management is played by a senior member of the dead person's mother or wife's family. It is often the dead person's wife's brother who is in charge of the organisation. There is a stronger awareness of how people are related at funerals. Zhao villagers widely reported examples of conflicts between *zijiawu* and *weijia* (i.e. relatives from one's mother, wife and daughter's side) in respect to organisation of funerals. For instance, Wancai, a villager in his mid-thirties, told me that his father's sister's aunt's family in another village once refused to attend a funeral of their relatives, because they were angry about the fact that they had been informed later than others, whom they thought less significant than them in generational terms. The funeral was therefore postponed for several days. As Wancai said to me: "If *weijia* do not show up, no way one can manage the funeral. Because it was in summer, the corpse could not be kept for too long. The whole family kneeled down in front of my father's sister's aunt's husband, begging him to allow them to go on with the funeral". Other villagers commented upon it later: "Oh it is not because they were told later than others. Wancai's family just wanted to make some trouble for that family, because they did not like them." The reason may not be as simple as this but it shows that funerals are thought of more as a battle field of demonstrating kin power.

6.4.2 Death and the Elderly

In order to understand the significance of funeral celebrations, we should have a brief look at how death and ageing are talked about in the village. Anthropologists working on traditional Chinese society have shown that Chinese were living 'under the ancestor's shadow' (Hsu 1971) and an individual was only a link between his ancestors and descendants in a long chain stretching from the past to the future (Baker 1979: 27). That is to say, death is a great event to an individual only because it is important to the family. Ancestor worship at different levels of a lineage community was used to maintain the very structure of that community (Freedman 1958: 81-91). Therefore, seniority was made one of most important co-ordinates to frame the familial hierarchy (Baker 1979: 15).[23] With respect to mainland China, familism was severely damaged by its encounter with the communist ideology (C. K. Yang 1965) and, consequently, the respect to the elderly decreased (Davis-Friedman 1991). What did/does death mean to Zhao villagers and how do they look after the elderly? Let us take these two questions in turn.

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[23]This picture of the traditional Chinese society has been challenged, see for instance R. Watson 1985; Wolf and Huang 1980.

The term that is used to describe death in the village is *die*[24]. In its dictionary definition, *die* is 'to fall down'. It is important to notice that *die* is a verb. Zhao villagers seldom say that 'someone is dead'. Instead, they would say that 'someone died'. For instance, to talk about death, Zhao villagers would say: *jiu shi wo xiang, ba ren gei die le* (this is how he died). A strong sense of how or when a person dies is always apparent when talking about death. When I was talking to Famin (my third host) about his father's death, several times I noticed that he always referred to it as an event rather than a state. He said to me, "We did not know when my father would die but we know he was going to die soon. We thought that he would die before the new year but he did not. During the summer, when everybody was busy, my father suddenly died. He looked quite good but suddenly died". At several places Famin mentioned his father's death but he always treated it as an event.

I have no materials to show whether this way of talking about the dead had been different during either the pre-revolutionary period or the Maoist era but I do see that, by engaging in taking about death as an event, Zhao villagers seem to exclude the possibility of talking *to* the dead. Unlike the case of the traditional Chinese society in which an ancestor was acting on and reacting to the living (Hsu 1971; Freedman 1958; Baker 1979),[25] Zhao villagers seem to be able to cut off the communication with the dead by refusing to take him or her as a state of being any longer. The dead are 'falling down and out', that is, *die*. The communication with the dead seems to be replaced by dialogues among the living, the *zijiawu* brothers. The dead therefore become an instrument to install relationships among the living by means of negotiation, communication, dialogue about the funeral.

Therefore, Zhao villagers are concerned with the funeral as a demonstration of their own economic and social status to other members of the community. Emotions or personal feelings can thus be removed from the funeral, which is taken as an social event. Zhao villagers no longer concentrate on the dead or death or ancestors; rather, they concentrate on the present, the living, the activities that people could manage and carry out at the funeral. The funeral is both produced by the living and for the living, it is made a 'ritual' about the present, a dialogue among *zijiawu* brothers, a public event, a social activity, an exhibition. By performing a funeral, Zhao villagers engage in activities which aims to transform their social relationships, enhance their economic power by showing it to others, strengthen their political ties with those they give high evaluation. At this moment of historical transformation, the funeral in Zhaojiahe can be said, in a sense, to be a death ceremony without a dead person concerned. The corpse is an instrument by which Zhao villagers engage in dialogues with each other. This is why Zhao villagers do not talk about what would happen after one is dead, they instead extensively comment upon what should be done about funerals. Contrary to the description of traditional Chinese image of death (see for instance Feuchtwang 1992), Zhao villagers do not talk about the 'other world' of death as another entity from which the dead could act on the living, but they comment on, recurrently, how their

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[24]A coincidence! The term that is used for 'to die' in the village is exactly the same in spelling as that of English, but pronunciation is entirely different. It sounds [de].

[25]In an elegant piece of ethnography, Vitebsky (1993) has shown how the Sora villagers (eastern India) communicate with the dead in daily life, who in turn make impacts and effects on the life of the living.

neighbour's funerals are carried out, for instance, how many people have joined, how expensive sets of gifts have been prepared.

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The respect paid to the elderly, to the senior members of a family for instance, now depends on whether the senior person is still powerful or helpful. Old people are treated very differently from one household to another. On the one hand, some Zhao elderly enjoy luxury birthday banquets, while others seem to be suffering. We have to remember that Zhaojiahe is a single surname village and all members of the village are allegedly *zijiawu* brothers. But there is no - either formal or informal - principle that regulates the village in terms of how the elderly should be treated. In general, old women are treated better than old men because old women can always help with domestic chores such as baby-sitting. Nonetheless, a general tendency shows that seniority as a principle, which dominated the hierarchy of traditional Chinese society, does not hold much power in the village as a whole.[26] It could be very hard for a man to survive when he is too old to work. Let us have a look at the following example of a portrait of the oldest man in the village.

Case 6.4 A portrait of the oldest man in the village

Tiancai's father, Yusheng, who was eighty five years old by 1992, was the oldest man in the village and had given up any kind of agricultural work due to his problems with his legs, though he still enjoyed talking and meeting people. He could not really move properly and spent most of his time sitting in front of his yard door sun-bathing. One day when I was chatting with Zunxi and his mother, through the door, I saw that Yusheng came into Zunxi's yard very slowly, dragging his legs behind him and walking with a cane. As soon as he came into the room, he started the conversation by raising a question that he kept asking many times: 'Why have I not yet died'? Zunxi's mother, Yusheng's brother's wife, who was herself paralysed, then said: "Yes, why don't you die? You are suffering at this age!" The oldest man of the village then turned to comment on how much he was still able to eat: "Don't you look at my legs, I cannot move well but I still eat a lot. This morning I had three pieces of steamed bread for breakfast. I eat a lot although I do not do anything." Another villager at present then said to him, "What a waste! You do not do anything but still consume. Why do you still eat so much?" "I do not know. I always want to die but I cannot decide my death. I am always hungry. I have to eat three or even four pieces of bread for every meal. You know my daughter-in-law who makes really huge pieces of bread", the oldest man said. Zunxi's mother continued to chat with the oldest man: "What do you live for at this old uselessness? Everybody dislikes you, you know?" "I know," the oldest man replied, "but what else can I do? Death does not fall on me, nothing I can do about it."

Yusheng was living in a small room without a light, which used to be the place for breeding a donkey. I was told by Zunxi and others that there was not even a sheet on Yusheng's bed - the oldest man lay on the exposed bricks covered by millet straw. As Zunxi said, once Yusheng wanted to light a candle and he almost put his room on fire. Since then matches were taken away by Tiancai, Yusheng's son, and Yusheng stayed in complete darkness. The oldest man wore the same cotton padded jacket and trousers for the whole year, he never changed no matter whether it was in summer or in winter. There were many lice on his jacket. Other villagers sometimes complained about the treatment of Yusheng but no one intervened. For instance, Zunxi said to me that Tiancai did not treat his father properly. Although the oldest man was Zunxi's father's elder brother, Zunxi did not dare intervene in Tiancai's family matter. As Zunxi said, "How could I say anything. That is his family matter. If I say anything, I will simply get trouble for myself. Others can do nothing about it!"

Later, I learnt that Tiancai was an adopted son. However, I do not think the fact that Tiancai was adopted can be used to explain his treatment of Yusheng, since there are many

[26]By way of looking at ageing metaphors, Thompson (1990) has provided an interesting account of how Chinese people are supposed to get old. However, the actual practice of ageing may be very different from what is said in Chinese metaphors and proverbs.

counter examples in which adopted sons were even better than consanguineous sons in terms of looking after their parents. What it does indicate is the fact that old people can be treated badly and the way in which old people are treated varies from one household to another.

This example indicates a shift in emphasis of the household structure. That is, people within a family start to be talked about in terms of 'usefulness' or 'uselessness'. This very practicality, which both derives from and strengthens the conditions of the household production, turns to be the dominant principle in the re-constitution of domestic division and order. The elderly are acting much less as 'agents' - who take responsibilities for the organisation of family or household - during the period of the economic reforms than before. Zhao elderly become more and more likely to be acted upon by others, such as their sons and daughters-in-laws.

6.4.3 Music and Wailing

How do Zhao villagers feel at funerals, or how are they supposed to feel? To Zhao villagers, funerals, like weddings, are 'happy things' *('xishi')*. At funerals, Zhao villagers do not appear to be 'depressed' or 'remorseful' or 'sober' or 'dismayed'; instead, they, including those who have lost their family members, often seem to be joyful and excited. Two questions emerge. First, what kind of feelings are supposed to be shown when they celebrate losses of their family members? This in turn raises the question of the extent to which emotion is socially constructed. Second, in specific, even if joyful feelings are acceptable at funerals, how are they actually possible in practice? By asking this question, I have assumed that losses of a close kin or a family member is a sad experience of an individual. I have assumed that feeling or emotions can be identified as 'inner entities' of individuals (see Potter and Potter 1990: 188-189). This is not be true. The following discussion will help us understand how feeling or emotions are not given entities but constituted in practice. In particular, I shall show how Zhao villagers are able to perform at funerals according to certain social requirements without any specific personal feeling such as grief.

When I was in the village, I felt slightly uneasy at the beginning since I had assumed that, when attending occasions like funerals or talking about death of their family members, I should show sympathy, grief and sorrow. Contrary to my assumption, no villager with whom I talked about death and funerals of their family members tried to hide their laughter and joy they had when they were organising the funerals. It is a common phenomenon that jokes and laughter burst out at funerals. To an outsider, it is quite difficult to distinguish a funeral from a wedding by its first appearance. As we have seen, in terms of the form of organisation, funerals and weddings share many things in common such as the organisation of the feast. The mood that Zhao villagers show at these two celebrations is often quite similar: happy and joyful. The funeral celebration is even more colourful than the wedding, for instance, Zhao villagers use the extremely colourful *jiao* ('sedan chair') for transporting the corpse.

In the last chapter, I showed that, on various kinds of daily occasions, Zhao villagers are able to comply to certain social norms without paying or paying little attention to what are supposed to be maintained according to these norms. In other words, what are supposed to be

maintained by exercising certain social formalities are simply replaced by carrying out these very formalities. For instance, Zhao villagers have to decorate with Chinese couplets on their doors during the period of Chinese New Year - no family would forget to do so - but what these couplets are about and how these couplets are written are no longer a serious concern. As long as there are couplets on their doors, no matter what they are and how they are written, that is fine. This suggests that, in order to understand particular forms of emotion, we may have to turn to the situations in which these emotions are generated. Turning to an situational interpretation, we need, in turn, look for the practice through which Zhao villagers are able to constitute themselves as a particular kind of 'persons'. The funeral celebration provides an intriguing angle for examining this phenomenon. I shall discuss particularly two aspects of the funeral practice - the use of music and wailing.

At Zhao funerals, musicians must be invited, but the type of music that the musicians are supposed to play is not significant. No villager was able to tell what *the* 'funeral music' was. In my view, it is the sound - not a particular kind of sound - that signifies the funeral. In recent years, partly due to the availability of television, pop music of various kinds started to appear at funerals. When I was in the village, for instance, one of the most popular song was the theme song from a Taiwanese soap series.[27] The title of the song is "Nothing on the earth is better than my mum". Everyone knew this song, and school pupils and young people were all singing it.[28] This song was also played at both of the funerals that I attended. According to my host, Wanbin, at that time, this song was popular for any occasion including funerals. Let me point out that, in both cases, it was the father of the family, and in both cases, the mother of the family was still alive. I had no way to associate this song with the situation.

In my view, to Zhao villagers, music is important to a funeral not because it expresses certain feelings associated with 'emotions' towards the dead but because it announces a social event. Music is important to a funeral not because it has a particular sound but simply because, like firecrackers, it makes a sound. As Zhao villagers often commented, the invitation of a group of musicians is a token of a good family condition. The number of musicians invited, rather than the choice of music, is the central concern of Zhao villagers. At funerals, Zhao villagers would come to the musician's table, asking the musicians to perform what they wanted to listen to. The presence of a group of musicians rather than music itself is the very core of this performance. Music is a presence, an announcement, a declaration, an indication rather than an expression, a feeling, or an emotion.

The same happens to wailing. At funerals, Zhao women wail but they start and stop their crying according to orders given by others. The start as well as the end of wailing are always abrupt, as if it is able to be switched on and off at any time. Women in Zhaojiahe wail very loudly in order to make sure that other people hear them. However, on many occasions, both women

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[27]I still do not know what this soap series is about. By hearing Zhao villagers comment on it, it seems to be a story about the experiences of children among them some lost their mothers.

[28]Every afternoon, when the pupils left the school, they were asked to walk in rows and sing 'nothing on the earth is better than my mum'. I also heard young villagers singing this song while working several times.

who wail and others who watch are aware of the fact that to wail at certain occasions is a social requirement, which does not have to be personal.

Case 6.5 Burning Qiqi paper at Dawa[29]

Wancheng is one of my host's *zijiawu* brothers, and his father died a few weeks ago before I arrived in the village. I joined a ceremony to burn paper money for Wancheng's deceased father at the graveyard. When Wancheng's relatives came and changed their clothes into white at his courtyard, the women all of a sudden burst into loud crying, while I was chatting with Wancheng's father's sister's son. Those women had been joking with each other a few seconds earlier. As soon as they covered their faces, they started to wail. The sudden wailing indicated that people were ready to leave. Men kept talking to each other and did not join the wailing. Then, people started to move and walked towards the graveyard behind the village. The further away from the village, the lower the women's wailing became. It almost completely disappeared when we arrived at the grave. After a couple of cups of wine were splashed on to the grave by Wancheng, the women started their wailing again. Then paper money was burned. The men kept laughing and talking to each other as they left the grave just as they had done when they came. The women, on the way back, did not wail until they reached the outskirts of the village - a distance from which their voices could be heard in the village. The closer to the village; the louder their voices.

While they were marching through the village, one woman, who was sitting in front of her own yard door and watching, talked to Wancheng's wife. She said: "Look at you, you were not crying, you were in fact laughing! Don't pretend any more! You wanted your father-in-law to die, didn't you?" After this, Wancheng's wife (still in the wailing march) started to exchange obscene jokes with the woman. The two woman kept laughing and joking with each other. A few rounds of word exchange, Wancheng's wife simply dropped out from the wailing march and joined the other, and the two women started to chat with each other happily. The other people did not seem to be disturbed at all and continued to march into Wancheng's yard, while wailing.

A few days later, I talked to one of Wancheng's neighbours, asking him what he thought about Wancheng's wife's behaviour. He said: "Oh, that woman is like that. She does whatever she wants. She even beats her mother-in-law. If Wancheng does not complain, what else can other people say?" However, in public, Zhao villagers often stress that to behave properly at family events is important. But this view does not prevent them from seeing formal articulation of the norms as part of social practice.

Wailing without tears at funerals is not unique to Zhao villagers. For instance, in the case of Taitou, Shandong Province, M. C. Yang made a similar observation (1945: 87). However, my intention is to stress the significance of viewing wailing as a practice which enables Zhao villagers to use it as means of complying with the social norms. Personal feeling or emotions do not have to be rendered on these occasions. I argue that Zhao villagers are fully aware that social actions are situation-specific. They are conscious of the difference between social formalities and the exercise of these formalities, the difference between articulations of social norms and situational performance. The question is: what are the consequences of engaging in this kind of practice?

[29]For a discussion of the formal representation of the funeral celebration, see Appendix 3.

Discussion

In this chapter, I have examined the village celebrations (the only existing form of collective activities) and their social significance. Following the theme introduced in the previous chapter, my aim in this chapter is to show how Zhao villagers act and perform at weddings and funerals, and how emotions are obtained through practices on these social occasions. In particular, I have drawn attention to two phenomena - the uses of 'violent' physical contact at weddings and the uses of music and wailing at funerals. I argue that 'emotion' is a social category to Zhao villagers and it needs to be obtained through practice. My point is that, to Zhao villagers, emotions or personal feeling are not given as 'inner experiences or entities' but produced in social practices of various kinds. There is no essential correlation between an 'inner experience' and an social expression. For instance, 'violence' can be used to construe different cultural meanings for different purposes. Furthermore, social practices are situation-specific in the village. In order to understand what an 'emotional' expression (such as wailing) means, one needs to look at the situation in which such expression takes place.

Although the problem of rural violence in post-reform China is still under-researched, some scholars have observed that there exists a wide range of violence across different sections in Chinese societies. In an effort to understand the nature of violence in Chinese societies, Harrell framed his questioning in the following way:

> What does a culture that condemns violence, that plays down the glory of military exploits, awards its highest prestige to literary, rather than martial, figures, and seeks harmony over all other values, in fact display such frequency and variety of violent behaviour, that is, of the use of physical force against persons? (1990: xi)

In Harrell's investigation, he sets up two propositions. First, violence is associated with conflict. Second, in order to engage in violent solution, people must have a motivation to settle the conflict by force (1990: esp. xi). Harrell has introduced a general framework for the study of violence in China with two further assumptions. One is that violence is assumed to be inseparable from anger and hatred and the other is that conflict derived from anger and hatred is assumed to be embedded in the social structure of the society. As for the question of how violence is possible within a culture which condemns it, Harrell argues that although the high culture condemns violence, the popular culture persistently praises the uses of violence. I would rather propose a different approach, that is, to take violent physical contact as situational practices, by which I mean two things. Firstly, instead of taking a grand view of relating violence to social structure and government policies, I propose to examine it in detail on various daily occasions, to look at violent physical contact as specific social practices. Secondly, in order to do so, we have to examine how the uses of violence and the comments about these uses are treated - for instance - by Zhao villagers. We have to start our investigation with an inspection of how Zhao villagers (in my case) talk about and comment upon their own actions of 'violence'.

As we have seen in this and the previous chapter, some assumptions and propositions about the nature of violence, made by Harrell among others, are not applicable and justifiable to the case of Zhaojiahe. To Zhao villagers, violence is not necessarily associated with hatred or anger and it does not always derive from conflicts. Furthermore, there may not be a 'motivation' behind the uses of violence. To Zhao villagers, violence can be used for different purposes on different occasions as a means of expressing different kinds of personal feelings or emotions. On some occasions such as weddings, 'violent' physical contacts are often spontaneous. The intense physical contact at weddings is used as a means of indicating happiness. However, the point is: this may not have always been so. Zhao villagers cannot recall that such 'violent' celebrations existed either during the period of people's communes (many aspects of celebrations were banned) or before the communists came to power. That is, both the forms of celebrations and the uses of body contact do not have an essential, unchanging character. Let us have a brief look at four major types of possible 'violent' physical contacts in Zhaojiahe.

i) 'Violence' at weddings. As we have seen, the intense physical contact at weddings has a different nature. As a social practice, 'violence' on this kind of occasion is used as a means of celebration, which bears no relevance to either hatred or anger. 'Violent' physical contacts at weddings are signs of celebration and happiness, though this form of physical contact, at least to the eyes of the outsiders (the ethnographer in this case), may appear to be of little difference from a vicious fight.

ii) 'Violence' in persuasion. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, when Zhao villagers try to show their hospitality, they can be very 'violent'. Persuasion by a host could even cause trivial physical damage, although the purpose of physical contacts of this kind is not to harm. If a host does not persuade his guests in a (physically) very 'active' way, he may be 'laughed at' (i.e. 'looked down upon') by others.

iii) 'Violence' of conflicts. In everyday life, quarrels and fights often take place among neighbours, *zijiawu* brothers, or relatives. These quarrels and fights are often expressions of hatred or anger between individuals concerned. 'Violence' involved on these occasions is often surprisingly intensive, although the reason, if there is any, for fighting is usually trivial and insignificant, even to those who are concerned.

iv) 'Violence' as a means of education. In particular, 'violent' actions are often carried out towards children in the village in order - according to the adults - to 'educate' them. Zhao villagers believe that physical punishment is an efficient way of 'education'.

My aim, which is different from the task Harrell sets up for his study of rural violence in China, is to look at the implications of physical contacts as everyday practices and the consequences of this kind of practice. My observation is that, to Zhao villagers, violent physical contact does not bear any essential cultural meaning. On different social occasions, a similar form of violent physical contact can be used to convey different messages and express different kinds of personal feelings or emotions. To Zhao villagers, 'emotions' cannot exist outside practice. In the village, 'violence' can be constructive, just as it can also be destructive. It depends on particular situations.

The consequence of engaging in this kind of practice is that it allows individuals to learn and adopt different strategies according to different situations. Zhao villagers are conscious of the situation in which they act. Their 'emotions' are not 'inner experiences' but public practices. Potter and Potter are right to point out that, although Chinese peasants have emotions as individuals in the west do, they deny the view that personal feeling will have any impact on social relationships or institutions. (1990: 180-196).[30] This observation may still hold true in many cases. However, my materials suggest that emotions or personal feelings are socially constructed as situational strategies. It is the situation that determines the forms and types of social action and expression of personal feeling or emotions. These strategies have to be learnt through practice and the uses of the body constitute an important part of this practice.

More evidently, the use of music and wailing at funerals has shown that Zhao villagers are quite able to perform according to certain social requirements without committing their personal feelings or emotions. For instance, Zhao women wail according to the instructions given by others. What I try to argue is that Zhao villagers not only engage in such practices but are also conscious of the changing circumstances under which their actions are carried out. To put it in very general terms, I argue that the crucial characteristic of everyday practices in Zhaojiahe is its *situationality* - a capability to adapt, to adopt, to modify, to change strategies and tactics of practices.

Zhao villagers do not view emotions, collective activities, social processes, social relationships bearing essential cultural meanings. They see the village life, the community, the society as alterable situations in which different agents work and re-work with different motivations. Zhao villagers take *zijiawu* brothers, relatives, neighbours and friends as changing categories situated in interrelated, modifiable, differentiated networks of social relationships. They are 'sociocentric' in the sense that they are able and willing to change their strategies when it is necessary. How they act depends upon the particular situations and particular kinds of social relations they encounter. On social occasions such as weddings or funerals, Zhao villagers display 'emotions' not because they *feel* like doing so or they *need* to do so; rather, they display certain 'emotions' (such as wailing) in order to *feel* in certain ways.

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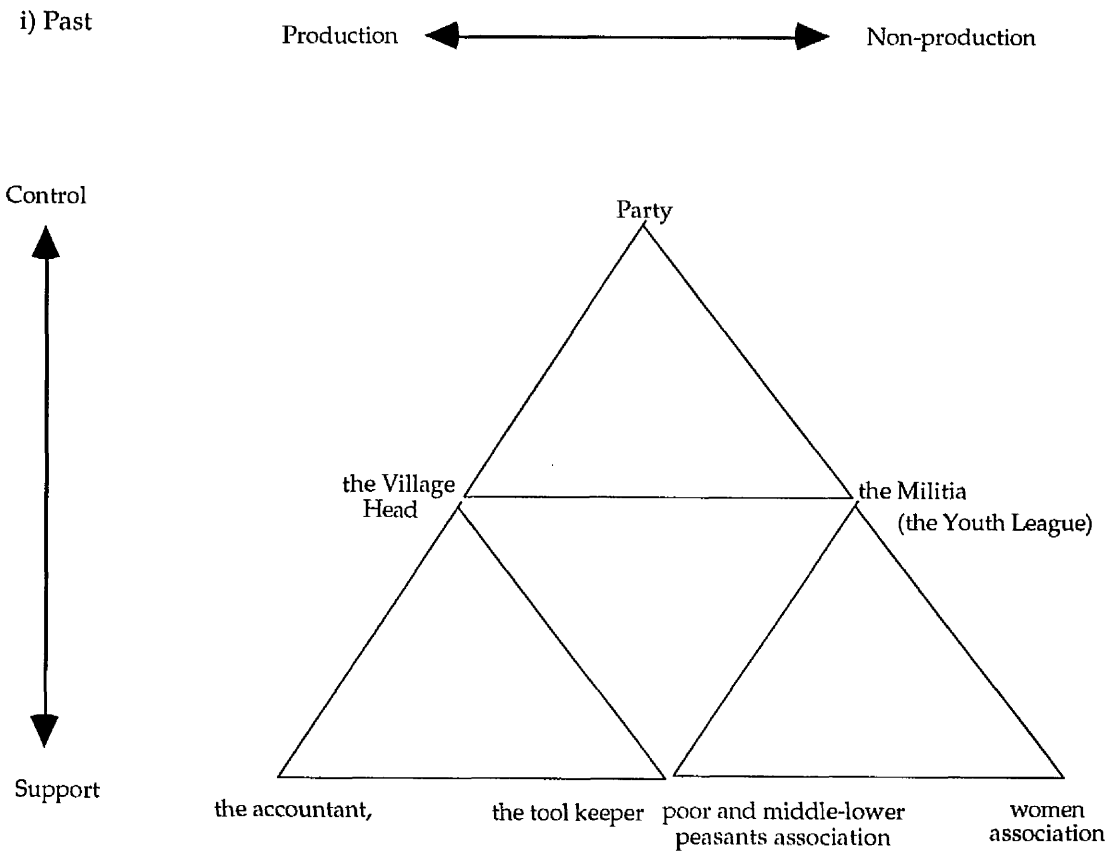
[30]There is a potential danger of running into an age-old anthropological premise which was most extensively articulated by Levy-Bruhl about the 'primitive mentality' and inherently embedded in Durkheim and Mauss' series of analyses of 'collective representations' of the 'primitive cultures'. That is, individuals' cognitive abilities are the same but the 'collective consciousness and representation' differ from one society to another. For an analytical discussion of Levy-Bruhl's position, see Evans-Pritchard 1934 . For a lengthy discussion of 'the foundations of primitive thought', see Hallpike 1979.

Figure 9. Political Structure: Past and Present



Chapter 7 The Changing Strategies of a Political Economy

Introduction

The politics of the 'political culture', as it is often called (e.g. Pye 1988), of contemporary China has attracted much attention. A great number of sinological anthropologists have sought to explain, to interpret, and to analyse Chinese people's life under the communist control from Mao to Deng from the perspective of a 'political culture'.[1] More recent research on rural China suggests that, although in the past the Maoist radical revolutionaries had fiercely argued that they would completely discard the age-old Chinese traditions which were said to be the obstacles of transformation into a new socialist society, there existed crucial continuities from the past (i.e. pre-communist) to the present (i.e. the Maoist communist) in terms of practices that concern the relation between state and society in China (see for instance Pye 1988; Shue 1988; Friedman et al. 1991). In respect to rural China, for example, Friedman (et al.) have argued that there are four continuities that the Maoist revolution was not able to surpass. The Chinese 'peasant culture', of which one of the most important characteristics is said to be its stress on 'personal bonds of loyalty', survived, and its historical problem - 'persistence of haunting problems such as poverty and poor education' - remained (1991: 268-276). In more general terms, Shue has argued that old habits, cultural or traditional, with respect to control and implementation of the state policies not only existed but also constituted a crucial part of the revolutionary machine of the Maoist brand. The village cadres resemble the Chinese gentry[2] in terms of the role they play in implementing the state policies (Shue 1988: 78-114).

What has happened since the 1980s when the economic reforms were launched? What is happening in a Shaanxi village after the ten years' economic reforms? What is the present form of political control and its effects? What is the role of the village cadres in Zhaojiahe in the early 1990s, and what is their relationship to the state? How are the state policies understood and acted upon in Zhaojiahe? These are questions that I wish to discuss in this chapter.

* * *

In the previous chapters, I have examined in detail different aspects of daily life and argued that the core characteristic of everyday practices in the village is 'situationality'. A Zhao villager is a 'person' who is aware of the circumstance in which he acts and a 'person' who acts differently according to different situations. Zhao villagers do not see social relationships or institutions as unchangeable entities; instead, they see both social relations and themselves as alterable enterprises. Zhao villagers learn to be socially acceptable through various kinds of

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[1]For a general survey of the studies of Chinese politics, see Halpern 1993. For an analytical sketch of different approaches employed in the analysis of state and society under Mao, see Shue's essay 'State, society, and politics under Mao - theory and irony in the study of contemporary China', 1988: 12-29. In a recent publication, Yang uses the term 'the culture of fear' to describe life in contemporary China, by which she means that the state intervention in daily life produces an effect of 'fear' on ordinary people. See Yang 1994: 20-21.

[2]For an introductory discussion of the role and social functions of the Chinese gentry, see Fei 1946 'Peasantry and gentry: an interpretation of Chinese class structure and its changes'.

practices. The emotions and personal feelings of Zhao villagers have thus to be understood as being located in situational practices.

Although these aspects of everyday life are taking place under a specific historical condition - the socio-economic transformation of contemporary China - I have not yet directly touched upon topics such as politics, changes of economic policies, the role of state and its local agents. It is my intention to examine this socio-economic transformation, taking place in mainland China, through an inspection of the changing strategies and tactics of everyday practices in a specific local setting. My argument is that, in order to understand the significance of this transformation - a sea-change in almost every corner of the society and in every aspect of the culture - one needs to look carefully at the changing strategies and tactics of everyday practices in different local settings.

In this chapter, I shall focus on neither the income statistics nor the political structure of the village; instead, I will portray Zhao villagers as participants who are produced and produce the conditions of the economic reforms in rural China. I shall look at how Zhao villagers - either as cadres or ordinary villagers - engage in the changing strategies of a political economy. It is the changing strategies of political practice and the role of the participants that will be examined. I maintain that both the village cadres and ordinary villagers have adopted a similar political strategy in the past decade and argue that this strategy helps install a new form of political dominance on the one hand and resists it on the other. There is an ambivalent character involved in the establishment of the post-reform politics - the conditions in which this politics works undermines its functions as a new mode of political control. In other words, power relations mean both dominance and resistance.

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There is a vast literature which aims to explain the economic reforms and the consequences of these reforms in rural China.[3] Although this literature focuses upon different aspects of rural China, a central concern underlying these different aspects of investigation is the effects of the reforms, the effects of the decollectivization process, the effects of the changes in economic practices, and the effects of changes in the way in which the government policies were installed. One of the most significant effects, which has been discussed recently among scholars both inside and outside mainland China, is the emerging tendency of economic stratification in post-reform rural China.[4]

In the case of Zhaojiahe, as we have seen in the previous chapters, life is predominantly agricultural and the economic differentiation is still in embryo, especially in comparison with the south-eastern coastal areas. However, this 'fact' does not prevent Zhao villagers from playing the role of active commentators. That is, although the gap between the rich and the poor in Zhaojiahe may be less significant than that in south-eastern China, this does not mean that Zhao villagers

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[3]For general discussions of the household production in the 1980s and its effects, see for instance O'Leary and Watson 1985; Feuchtwang and Hussain (eds.) 1983; Griffin (ed.) 1984; Feuchtwang, Hussain and Pairault (eds.) 1988; Hinton 1990; Siu 1989: esp. 272-90; Croll 1994; Saith 1987; Potter and Potter 1990: 158-79; White 1987.

[4]For a overall review of the significance of socio-economic stratification in rural China, see Walder 1989. For an interesting case study in a north-eastern Chinese village, Heilongjiang Province, see Yan 1992. For reference in Chinese language, see for instance Lu 1992.

see this gap as less significant than those, for instance, in Guangdong do. My discussion of the effects of the economic reforms will again focus on a detailed examination of everyday political economy. I maintain that the rural reforms have not only modified the relationship between state and society (Shue 1988), and between the cadres and ordinary villagers (Oi 1985), but have also re-arranged the whole discourse about the relationship between economy and politics. Instead of looking at actual incomes and other economic indices, my interest in this chapter is to show how Zhao villagers perceive the emerging economic differentiation in the village and how this perception constitutes part of a practice that signifies a new form of political dominance and control. My main argument is that, facing a more complex social environment and the opening up of economic possibilities, Chinese villagers (in the case of Zhaojiahe) - both cadres and ordinary villagers - are adopting more flexible strategies in pursuing economic competence and political power. Political alliance has become a changing enterprise. Political domination and control are carried out through economic punishment whose logic is derived from the logic of everyday practice. That is, who is punished does not only depends on what he does but depends on who he is and the situation in which he is engaged.

I shall look specifically at four different areas of economic-politics. First, I shall examine the way in which Zhao villagers talked about the land re-distribution and its problems. Then, I will look at how Zhao villagers perceive the emerging economic differentiation among *zijiawu* brothers. Third, I will look at how the birth control policy - the only 'hard policy' referred to by Zhao villagers - is carried out under the new form of political control. Finally, I shall provide a detailed account of the political campaign, the second socialist education movement, which took place in 1992 when I was in the village. This campaign was designed in many ways to resemble the Maoist style of politics but failed to achieve anything similar. A close inspection of this campaign shows how the two dominant means of the Maoist political machinery - the mass meeting and work-team - have stopped functioning in post-reform rural China.

7.1 Luck and Land

Land, which used to belong to the collective, the Zhaojiahe brigade, was redistributed on long term leases to each household in 1981. According to the instruction of the local government, land should be adjusted due to the demographic changes of each household every five years. The adjustment of land caused many disputes among Zhao villagers, although few of them complained about how the land was re-distributed originally. It is interesting to have a retrospective look at the scheme of redistribution of land and the way in which Zhao villagers commented upon the re-distribution. When talking about the re-distribution scheme, Zhao villagers referred to a notion of 'luck' to explain their dissatisfaction with the pieces of land that they were given. It is interesting to notice that this notion of 'luck' disappears in the interpretation of how some brothers are better off than others after a decade of experimentation

with the economic reforms. To interpret how some brothers 'get rich first',[5] Zhao villagers turn to look at social and political power as explanation.

Zhao villagers had no complaint about the way in which collective land was re-distributed in 1981. To Zhao villagers, the re-distribution produced an equal distribution of land at each single step. Not only is each person entitled to the same amount of land, but each person is also given the same share of either good or bad pieces of land exactly in proportion to the size of each household. Zhao villagers were also very happy about the 'democratic' process of re-distribution. At every step of discussion about the redistribution, there was always a representative from each household, usually a male adult, present. The scheme of re-distribution had to be discussed until an agreement was reached among these representatives from each household. In particular, Zhao villagers extensively commented on the way in which a particular piece of land was assigned to a particular household. To decide which piece of land one should obtain, Zhao villagers turn to chance and draw lots, or as it was called in the village *zhua-zi-dan* ('drawing the bullet').[6] It is 'luck' that finally decides what one gets, though it concerns only the distance and location of particular pieces of land.

When talking retrospectively about the land re-distribution, Zhao villagers attributed their dissatisfaction, if there was any, to their bad luck. For instance, when some villagers were complaining about the location or quality of their land, they blamed themselves for not being able to draw a 'good bullet'. As Wanyou, an old villager from Dawa, once said, "Yeah, it was so, whatever you got, you got it by yourself. Everyone got some good and some bad pieces of land. No complaint. It was *zhuazidan"*. Famin, my third host, also said, "It was fine by then, since everyone was there. No tricks". When commenting upon the process of *zhuazidan,* Zhao villagers stressed the point that 'lottery' was a fair and equal way of distributing or re-distributing property, though they did not employ particular terms such as 'chance' or 'luck'. A typical phrase employed in this kind of comment was: 'You got it yourself'.

There are two points that I would like to make here. The first is that this notion of 'you-get-it-yourself', similar to that of luck, is socially constructed in reaction to the wider changing environment of the 1980s and 1990s in rural China, under which economic differentiation has started to emerge. In my view, the construction of an idea of 'you-get-it-yourself' tells the other side of the story: Zhao villagers do not believe that some people can get rich first without special connections with political and social power of a particular kind. That is, the past is used as a critical contrast to the present. It is not that everything was satisfactory to everyone in the past; rather, this construction of the past itself is a complaint about the present, in which Zhao villagers see no role of 'luck'. I argue that this idea of 'you-get-it-yourself' is constructed for a particular purpose in order for Zhao villagers to comprehend and articulate a new form of power relations in the present society.

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[5]One of the most famous government slogans in the 1980s was - 'Let some people get rich first', which, as an economic policy, aimed to bring competence and incentives into China's economy by way of allowing income differences.

[6]This is not a unique practice in rural China. For instance, in Chen Village, Chan (et al. 1984) described the similar process in dealing with distributing land during the land reform period in the early 1950s, but the difference is that in Chen village the village cadre made fools of other villagers in order to benefit his own relatives and neighbours.

Second, this idea of 'you-get-it-yourself' is very much, to use Durkheim's terminology, a 'collective representation', which is not supposed to be used to explain the possible differences between individual households, but rather to build a solidarity among *zijiawu* brothers. We may need to be reminded that Zhaojiahe is a single surname village and all members of the village descend from a common ancestor. For a long period of time, there might have been a formal representation of kinship organisation that stresses the equality among brothers. In my view, the land re-distribution is like a property division within a family: every son is entitled to the same amount of family property (see for instance Cohen 1976; Baker 1979). However, the economic difference would appear soon after the property was equally distributed among the sons of a family (see for instance R. Watson 1985). Zhao villagers have no difficulty in accepting that, if one gets a piece of land which he does not particularly like, he will have to accept it since it is his 'luck'. But this logic is not reversible: if someone is better off than others, or someone has more land than others, or someone has more money than others, Zhao villagers will never turn to the notion of 'you-get-it-yourself' as an interpretation. In other words, nobody could be 'luckier' than others in terms of achieving more economic resources, and economic differentiation has to be explained by social stratification and political power. I shall show below that Zhao villagers refuse to accept the idea of 'you-get-it-yourself' in explaining why 'some brothers get rich first', and how Zhao villagers insist that the better-off brothers are backed up by their connections with more powerful social relations.

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A direct consequence of redistributing land to each household is that land has been cut into ever smaller pieces cultivated by each family. For instance, my host in Dawa has roughly 20 *mu* area of land which consists of 11 pieces. The smallest piece is about five square metres, while the largest is about 5 *mu*.

According to the local government, land should be adjusted every five years according to the demographic changes within each household. In both 1986-7 and 1990-1991, some villagers whose family members left the village were asked to return some land to the village in order to allow the village committee to redistribute it to those who had new babies. The adjustment of land caused many disputes in the village. These disputes are far more complex than refusing to return land to the village committee. Let us have a look at the following example of a dispute in order to understand the complexity of the issue.

Case 7.1 The land dispute between Wanbin and Xincai

In February 1992, my host in Dawa, Wanbin, whose two sons, Xicang and Zuncang, both had gone to universities in the late 1980s, was informed by Wancheng, then group leader, that the party secretary, Xincai, wanted Wanbin to return the land which had been assigned to his sons.[7] One morning, at breakfast, Wanbin's wife, Yin'ai, burst into rage. And she talked about her land and threatened to fight with Xincai. Yin'ai and the grandmother of the house were both swearing and cursing Xincai, accusing him of being corrupt. Although Wanbin did not usually joined the

[7]In mainland China, according to the household registration system, people have been divided into two categories: agricultural residence and non-agricultural residence. Basically, officials, factory workers and those living in cities and towns have non-agricultural residence registration, while peasants have the other. For those who are non-agricultural residents, the government assigns a quota to buy their grain each month, particularly, before the 1980s. A university student is viewed as an official and will be registered as a non-agricultural resident. Anyone who is registered as a non-agricultural resident should not have land in the village.

cursing, he showed a strong contempt towards Xincai. Xincai was said by Wanbin to be the origin and the worst example of the village corruption.

The dispute between Wanbin and Xincai is linked to the relationships that they maintain with their *zijiawu* brothers. In Dawa, there are two big branches of close *zijiawu*. One is Wanbin's close *zijiawu* which includes eight Shu-Bei brothers;[8] among them Wancheng is the youngest. The other big branch is Xincai's four brothers who are all Gengwu's sons. More than 60% households in Dawa comes from these two close *zijiawu*. There is a difference in terms of kinship structure between these two close *zijiawu*. Among the eight *zijiawu* brothers of Wanbin, there is both an economic and political differentiation. As an emerging sub-branch, Wankai,[9] Yangkai, Jinkai and Jinchang started to form another more intimate group within this close *zijiawu*. This sub-branch of Wanbin's close *zijiawu* claimed that they did not want to get involved with the village politics too much, but they wanted to use the opportunity of the economic reforms to improve their living standards. As Yangkai said to me one evening: "I used to be the brigade head in the late 1970s but I did that not for myself. I did that for my brothers. Then they were both at high schools. I thought, if I took the job, they would have better chances than others to join the army or get a job outside the village. I did help them to join the army. Now, I don't want to be anything. How much money can a village cadre make nowadays? Nothing. I'd rather do something else. I have contracted a stone mill and I can make a good fortune of it." Jinkai was a high school teacher at the township, while his brother, Jinchang, recently returned to the village and was preparing to work in another township as a local official. This sub-branch of Wanbin's close *zijiawu* were trying to avoid getting involved in the dispute.

The other three brothers of this close *zijiawu* have different agendas. Wanbin does not take himself as closely related to the rest, since he has connections outside the town through his student sons. Wanbin used to be a village cadre and he, who still has strong influence on the village politics, is very critical of the present state of the society. Wanyou, although the most senior, is thought to be quite powerless because - as he himself explained - he had no son alive in the village. Wanyou disliked Wanbin but took him as an ally when standing against Gengwu, Xincai's father. Wancheng, the youngest among the eight and the group leader by then, was also very critical of the economic reforms and somehow maintained fairly good relations with both his *zijiawu* brothers and Xincai.

Xincai's brothers are different. Xincai, who came back to the village a few years ago as a retired soldier, was himself the party secretary. Lucai, Xincai's elder brother, was working in the town as a manager of a state-owned supermarket. Gencai, one of Xincai's younger brothers, was working in the township government as temporary staff in 1992. Xincai's brothers are more locally connected and they are quite close to each other.

Wanbin had problems not only with Xincai but also with Gengwu, Xincai's father. According to Wanbin, Gengwu was too selfish to be with. According to Wanyou, however, Wanbin was also too difficult to be with, since Wanbin was very 'individualistic' *(ge)*. Wanyou supported Wanbin's view about Gengwu but maintained a fairly good relation with Gencai, Gengwu's son, and Xincai. In Zhaojiahe, it was very unusual to see two villagers passing by without nodding to each other. That was the relation between Gengwu and Wanbin. Wanbin and Xincai seemed to remain, at surface, polite with each other when they met occasionally. The two families had been in hostility for a long while.

For several days since that morning when I heard Yin'ai cursed Xincai, Yin'ai and the grandmother had always sworn at Xincai whenever they had nothing else to do. It became a regular topic at the dining table everyday. As Yin'ai once murmured, "I want to see who dares take my land away, fuck your fucking mother-bastard. Look at yourself! How much have you stolen from the collective?! From the village!? Look at your own brothers! The whole family has moved into the town but still refuse to return their land. What else do you want to say? You want to take my land? Dare you!" The grandmother always joined the cursing whenever Yin'ai started it.

Although Wanbin and his wife appeared to sound frightening behind their door, other villagers such as Wanyou were saying that Wanbin's family was in panic. A few years earlier, just after Zuncang, the youngest son of the family, went to university, Wanbin turned the best piece of his land into an orchard. Wanyou and other villagers interpreted this as a precautionary protection, because, even if Wanbin had to return some land to the village, he would not be able to return this best piece of land which was as large as five *mu*. As Wanyou said, "They are clever.

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[8]Wanyou's brother, Wanhe, left the village in the 1950s and did not live there any longer. For a discussion of kin relationships among these eight *zijiawu* brothers, see Appendix 2.

[9]Wankai works in the county town as a book shop manager.

They have planted fruit trees. Even in the future when all members of their families are dead, you have no way to ask them to return their good pieces of land, because you can't cut down their fruit trees. If they are forced, they will give you the worst pieces of land they have, since you can't take their fruit trees, can you?" Similarly, Lucai, Xincai's brother, also turned his land into the orchards. According to Wanbin, Lucai's wife and his children had by then already left the village to live in the town. According to the regulation of land re-distribution, if a person leaves Zhaojiahe, this person should return his or her assigned land back to the village, which will allow the village committee to re-assign the land to those families with new born babies. Turning one's own land into orchards became a political strategy in the early 1990s for those whose family members left the village. Ironically, in the mid 1980s, the local government had supplied free technological training and saplings of apple tress to Zhao villagers, in order to help improve the living standards of the area, but few Zhao villagers were willing to grow fruit trees. Zhao villagers did not want to follow the instruction from the local government then but, a few years later, everyone in the village started to grow apple trees although technology and saplings were not free any longer.

The accusation runs in a complex pattern. Wanbin accuses Xincai of corruption. Wanyou is critical of Wanbin's motive. Other villagers are suspicious of both Wanbin and Xincai. But no one would stand up and speak out. Wancheng was in charge of this matter in Dawa and he would not upset his brother, Wanbin, in any case unless it was necessary. That is why Wancheng 'informed' Wanbin that Xincai told him that he should re-collect Wanbin's land. Wancheng was willing, under this situation, to play the role of an instrument. He did not act as an agent because he did not decide or take responsibility. He only informs and passes the message. I do not know how Wancheng talked with Xincai, but, when Wancheng was talking to Wanbin, Wancheng showed his respect for Wanbin. Wanyou always blamed Xincai for corruption when talking with Wanbin, but when talking with other villagers, Wanyou would change his tone, often being critical of Wanbin. Other villagers in Dawa were also critical of Wancheng. Some blamed him for being a coward who did not dare touch anyone who was powerful. Others accused Wancheng of occupying more land than he should. However, all these accusations take place in the form of gossip. They are topics inside the house, behind doors and among intimates. In public, Dawa villagers smiled at each other as usual. Until I left the village, neither Wanbin nor Lucai had returned anything to the collective. No Zhao villager believed that either of them would return anything to the collective.

The disputes about land are never simple. There are always other elements involved. In general, Zhao villagers complain a lot about the unfairness and injustice of the adjustment of land but no one speaks out their complaints in public or in front of those about whom the complaints are made. Behind their doors, Zhao villagers criticise their *zijiawu* brothers, or their neighbours, with sharp words, but no one would speak out in public about these issues. When Zhao villagers talk about these issues with their neighbours, relatives or friends, they change their tones of criticism and complaints according to different circumstances. For instance, talking with Wanbin, Wanyou would be very critical of Xincai and his brothers; while talking with Gencai, or Wancheng, Wanyou would be critical of Wanbin, though Wanyou and Wanbin are close *zijiawu* brothers and often political allies. In general, I maintain that Zhao villagers are aware of the circumstances in which a statement, or a criticism, or a complaint is made. This consciousness of the situation under which social action takes place must, in my view, be taken into consideration in order to understand the changing strategies of the political economy in post-reform China.

Another observation deriving from the above example is that political control and dominance have become less direct than they used to be during the Maoist era. Wanbin's family is thought to be powerful in the sense that two of his three sons have been to university and he has connections outside the village. Xincai's power is locally located and he is the party secretary of the village. However, Xincai would not confront Wanbin directly; instead, Xincai asked

Wancheng to claim the extra land from Wanbin. Wancheng, although he may not like his *zijiawu* brother, would not demand the extra land from Wanbin, because he did not want to confront Wanbin directly either. So he simply told Wanbin that it was Xincai who asked him to do so. Although Xincai was the party secretary who actually controlled the village, he had no way to claim Wanbin's extra land. Maybe Xincai did not even intend to do so, maybe he was only threatening for the purpose of making Wanbin feel the pressure. Wancai, from Nanjian, commented on this by saying that it was because Wanbin was adopted that he was asked to return his extra land, otherwise nobody would have dared to ask. Wanbin himself never said anything about whether he should return the extra land or not, but always insisted that Xincai was corrupt and his brother, Lucai, had more extra land than anybody else.

When facing this complexity of social relationships, Zhao villagers have shown their willingness to adopt flexible strategies in seeking political security and economic advantage. I suggest that political power in post-reform China is becoming selective and precautionary. As Zhao villagers' comments on Wanbin's case show, everything could have been different if it happened to another villager. Both Xincai and Wanbin did not intend to confront each other directly. It is worth noting that I am not dealing with the political structure in post-reform rural China, which is often laid out as a battle-field between the two sides - the dominant (the cadres and officials) and the dominated (the ordinary villagers). Instead, I am dealing with the changing strategies of everyday politics, and with a general question of how political power has been transformed into a different form in the past fifteen years. Xincai might have taken more coercive measures to enforce his order if he was dealing with another villager. This new form of political power differentiates and selects before it works.[10] Unlike in the Maoist past, political power has become alert, self protective, cautious, precautionary. This form of political control comes alongside the emergence of economic stratification in the village.

7.2 The Perception of Social and Economic Stratification

Since the late 1980s, scholars in mainland China have turned their sociological attention to the problem of peasants' stratification as an emerging, unprecedented phenomenon. For instance, drawing on thirteen village studies, Lu (et al.) argues that there has been a tendency towards peasants' stratification and classifies rural China into three different types of economy - highly stratified, less stratified and not yet stratified peasants' economy (1992). According to this criterion of classification, Zhaojiahe should be listed in the last group. In Zhaojiahe, there is no village industry, though some small scale, family operated businesses, such as bean-curd processing and stone milling, have started to emerge. The majority of Zhao villagers still engage in agricultural production.

Although there is no village industry and there is little detectable difference among Zhao villagers in terms of living standards (to the eyes of the ethnographer), Zhao villagers are no less

[10] I am using the term 'power' in the Foucauldian sense, whose argument about power and knowledge is well known. For an introductory reference, see Rabinow 1984; Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983. For a critique of Foucault's notion of power, see Sangren 1995.

active than others in modifying their practices in relation to a new type of economy, a new set of power relations, and a new articulation of the society. Instead of focusing upon what the actual difference between different households is in terms of living standards, I shall try to examine the way in which Zhao villagers perceive, talk about, comment upon the emergence of economic differentiation. I shall look specifically at two themes: production of space as a source of social power and perception of the better-off brothers.

7.2.1 Production of space as a source of social power

Space and time are basic categories of social existence and they are historically situated, specifically defined social practices. Is there any change or adjustment in the strategies of everyday practices regarding the uses of space and time during the period of the economic reforms?

In comparison to the period of the Maoist revolution, the economic reforms have brought a new set of classificatory criteria, among which a spatial reference is the most characteristic. During the Maoist era, the persistent classification of people was based, deriving from Marx's idea of class struggle, on class. For instance, Zhao villagers remembered how they were categorised into different classes during the period of land reform in the early 1950s. Although Zhao villagers had considered themselves as *zijiawu* brothers, they were categorised into rich peasants, middle peasants, and poor and lower-middle peasants during the period of land reform. What I want to point out is that the Maoist class-classification is built on a sense of history. In other words, it is built on an epistemology that tries to distinguish and identify the differences between the past, present and future. Who one used to be determines one's position in the society which aims to cast itself far away from the past - a miserable past of oppression and exploitation, as it was alleged. A person's past, or his father's, determines his present and, to a degree, his future. This epistemology of the Maoist revolution is organised around time rather than space.

Of course, this does not mean that different locations were not in some ways significant in social life at that time, but the point is that these differences of places and locations were often articulated in terms of change - from a repressive past to a celebrated present or future (cf. Croll 1994). For instance, during the period of people's communes, the difference between the urban and the rural was not thought to be a spatial problem of social inequality, but rather a problem of part of the remaining old order of the 'old society' (*'jiu-she-hui'*). During the Cultural Revolution, many youth volunteered to travel to the poor areas of the countryside to settle down in order to make revolutionary changes there. Space, in the hand of the Maoist revolutionaries, was employed in the articulation of a revolutionary society which sets its epistemological premise in time and history. Under the Maoist regime, space and its representations were secondary to time and the theme of history.

This situation started to change in the 1980s. In the past fifteen years, alongside the changing strategies of implementing governmental practices, space emerged as a major organiser for social action and the most important frame of reference for social classification. Space as a source of social power is not neutral. Instead, it classifies, defines, moralises different groups of

people who are located, or simply imagined to be located, in different places. This process of differentiating people and organising social action by means of referring to spatial images occurred in the past fifteen years, which I argue represents one of the main currents that characterise the transformation taking place in mainland China.

Let me take a few examples to illustrate my point. The area where Zhaojiahe is located is characteristic of a complex topography and the whole area is cut by several dry valleys (although sometimes there are small streams at the bottoms of these valleys) in which both villages and land are spread (see Map 6).[11] Two local terms are applied to indicate these two different kinds of living conditions: one is *yuan-shang* which means 'up-on-platform' and the other is *yuan-xia* which means 'down-to-valley'. During the period of people's communes, this division between *yuanshang* and *yuanxia* had little actual influence on the social life of Zhao villagers. These two terms were not employed in daily conversations then to indicate two contrasting places; rather, neighbouring villages were more likely to be referred to by their names, such as Beimen or Poti (both are *yuanshang* villages). The situation changed in the past decade: the names of the neighbouring villages are no more as significant as the locations - whether in *yuanshang* or *yuanxia* - that these villages occupy. A social privilege have been given to *yuanshang* and, for Zhao villagers, *yuanxia* becomes something shameful to be associated with.

For instance, in the past, bride exchanges between villages were not affected by the geographical division between *yuanshang* and *yuanxia*.[12] In the case of Zhaojiahe, a large proportion of Zhao wives whose marriages took place before 1980 came from the *yuanshang* areas but, since 1980, few new brides have been recruited from the *yuanshang* villages. A shift of focus in marriage negotiation took place in the village in the past fifteen years: Zhao villagers were less concerned about what kind of families their daughters were going to marry[13] and more about where they were going to marry. It was, first of all, a concern about whether one's daughter would be married to *yuanshang* or not. Zhao villagers have started to prefer their daughters to be married to *yuanshang* villagers in recent years. This change in marriage negotiation is reflected in the way in which Zhao villagers talk about their wives of different ages. When Zhao villagers talk about those who married before 1980, they refer to them as either their brother's or relatives' wives, or even by their names; whereas, when they talk about young wives, Zhao villagers are more likely to refer to them as a wife from either *yuanshang* or *yuanxia*. Or, Zhao villagers would relate a young wife to the village from which she was married into Zhaojiahe. In a sense, who a person is is thought of as dependent on where he or she is from.

Many other words of the daily vocabulary, deriving their power from spatial images, are popular in Zhaojiahe. For instance, Dawa, one of the seven villager groups in Zhaojiahe, is located slightly away from the main village (see Map 8). The villagers from the main village nicknamed Dawa Xiao Taiwan (little Taiwan) because the villagers from the main village

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[11]For a more elaborate discussion of topography of the area, see Chapter 1, Section 1.2.

[12]For a discussion of the change of marriage localities, see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.

[13]Traditionally, it was a central concern for Chinese parents to consider whom their daughter would marry to. In other words, it was the social status that concerned the parents. In a way, this practice in mate choices continued during the period of the Maoist revolution, though ideas of what was supposed to be good social status changed. For a discussion of how political status replaced the traditional ideology about good families in mate choices, see Croll 1981.

believed that people in Dawa were better off than others. No matter whether it is true or not, it is evident that social differentiation is likely to be articulated in terms of places and locations. Another point is that, in all these uses of spatial classifications, Zhao villagers, when speaking from the point of view of the self, portray themselves as the people occupying the worst place.

These spatial divisions as geographical differences might have existed for long but ideological connotations were given to or invented for them recently. For instance, when talking about the increasing difficulties to attract brides to Zhaojiahe, Zhao villagers insisted that no girl wanted to come down to live in *yuanxia* and ignored the fact that the number of brides recruited from other *yuanxia* villages also decreased (see Table 4). It is in the past fifteen years that places and locations have become a central concern for regulating and articulating social relations. Social power, economic status and power in particular, is articulated through spatial images and classifications. In other words, there is a change in the past fifteen years that privileges space over time as a source of social power, and this change not only creates more geographical divisions but also charges these divisions with social, economic and political meaning and significance.

However, my point is not simply that space as a source of social power is not neutral but, more importantly, that this form of social power has a historical dimension which tells us how, in relation to time, space has emerged in the past fifteen years as a major frame of reference for social action. In the case of Zhao villagers, I see the production of space in recent years as part of a narrative which is accommodated in the wider social context of transformation and change. In a re-organisation of the fields of social relations, space becomes the dominant form of social experience. The significance of Zhao villagers portraying themselves as being trapped in the worst place, at least in part, tells of their dissatisfaction in being peasants in Zhaojiahe.

To Zhao villagers, different places can be judged only by means of comparison of their economic conditions, just as some rigid economists tend to believe that their life insurance will be secured by the development of methods of statistical analysis. In order to make such a comparison, how much one can earn is the first natural question. No Zhao villagers will hide their economic power from others if they think they are better off than others. Zhao villagers always assume that one place is better than another, thus the south (either south China or the south of Shaanxi) is better than the north (either north China or the north of Shaanxi), the cities are better than the villages, *yuanshang* is better than *yuanxia*. There is no ambiguity, no alternative framework of comparisons. Daily dialogues between a Zhao villagers and a person from outside of the village could be embarrassing, because people in Zhaojiahe ask very personal questions. Let me introduce an example of my own experience.

Case 7.2 The first conversation with my host

The day after I arrived in Zhaojiahe, my host had the following conversation with me at the dining table.

"You from Britain? Is Britain better?"
"Well, fine, not too bad. Britain is fine."
"Better life?"
"The living standard is probably higher."
"Even better than Beijing?"
"Well, yes. The living standard is higher than that of Beijing."

"Really? Better than Beijing?"
"Yeah, sort of."
"Our money does not work there, I am afraid?"
"No, we have to use British pounds."
"Who gives you money then?"
"It is different and depends on the kind of scholarship a student gets."
"Yours?"
"My living expense is paid by the Chinese government."
"How much?"
"About three hundred pounds per month."
"How much is that?"
"About three thousand Chinese yuan."
"That is a hell of a lot."
"Well, more expensive over there."
"It's a lot."
"It depends, you know, on how much you have to spend, for instance."
"That is a hell of a lot. Isn't it?"
"Yeah, maybe."

To my mind, the connection between space and wealth (different places and different levels of economic development) is a historical construct which can be seen through the changes taking place in Zhaojiahe. This change in turn produces and reproduces two effects: firstly, it makes Zhao villagers see outside forces (wealth from other places) as the ultimate genesis and source for social change, which parallels the government's stress on the importance of attracting foreign investment; secondly, this also makes Zhao villagers see themselves as victims rather than agents of social change.

Under this circumstance, it is not surprising to see how the state is understood in the village as a 'superpower' that generates and distributes wealth. I had several experiences of Zhao villagers asking me to report to the officials of the central government when I returned to Beijing (assuming that I knew the high-rank officials in the government because I came from Beijing), requesting special financial allocations because, as it was said, they were too poor to survive. I did not know how to answer these appeals. Many Zhao villagers believed that wealth was generated from the central government and it was the government that could make them rich. Once when I talked with Yangkai and his brothers and cousins while drinking, they started to complain about how poor Zhao villagers were, in particular about the price of wheat which was said to be too low to make Zhao villagers prosperous. I asked them which price they were talking about. They told me that there was no difference between market price and state price any longer and both were about 0.42 *yuan* per *jin*. Then I said: 'What can we do?' A cousin of Yangkai, who was also a village school teacher in another village, said to me seriously: "The government has to raise *the market price*, otherwise, peasants are always poor." At the table where we were drinking, nobody considered the fact that Zhao villagers consumed 80-90% of what they produced, or the possibility of increasing productivity.

Another experience of mine is even more intriguing. One sunny afternoon, I walked around in the village with little purpose. I came across a group of young villagers who were sitting in front of Famin's door, chatting to each other and enjoying the sunshine. I said 'hello' to them and joined them, listening or trying to listen to what they were talking about. A young

villager in his late twenties smiled at me and, all of a sudden, asked me: "Is your jacket *assigned* by the government"? My jacket was old and nothing unusual. I lived in Beijing through the radical years of the Maoist revolution but I had not been given any clothes by the government. I did not know where this young man got his idea that I could possibly obtain clothes from the government. He looked very sincere and honest, waiting for my answer. I had no answer for this question. I felt puzzled.

In recent years, some scholars have been arguing that, since the late 1970s, due to the economic reforms and new policies, there has emerged a civil society in China which provides a counter-balance to the monopoly of the state power (e.g. Yang 1994). It is true to the extent that the state has loosened its direct control on economy but this does not mean that, as a social imaginary, as a source of social power, the state has become less powerful or relevant. As we have seen, in the case of Zhaojiahe, the state is represented as the ultimate outside force that owns the power to make economic and social changes.

7.2.2 Perception of the better-off brothers

Within the village, Zhao villager started to see *zijiawu* brothers as being economically differentiated in the past few years. I am particularly interested in the way in which explanations are made about why some brothers are better off than others.

Case 7.3 Xicai's painted walls

Zhao villagers like living in the *yao* (the cave dwelling - see Figure 2) because a *yao* is warm in winter and cool in summer. Most *yao* in the village are made of grey bricks. After completion of construction, the grey bricks are left exposed, which often makes the inside of a *yao* dark.

On the Chinese New Year's Eve of 1992, (the New Year's Day was the fourth of February), I went to visit a neighbour of Wanbin's, Xicai, who was living with his wife and two small children. When I got into Xicai's *yao*, I realised that the inside of his *yao* was painted with white clay, which made a significant difference. I was quite impressed because this was the first *yao* that I had visited that was painted with white clay - bright and clean. We watched something on TV and had a chat. Neither Xicai nor his wife talked very much. Both Xicai and his wife, Mingfang, are seen by other villagers as competent peasants, because both of them are strong and good farmers. Their *yuanzi* (the courtyard) is always kept very clean and organised. They have two children, ten and eight.

Several days later, when I was chatting with Wanyou, I happened to mention my impression of the painted wall of Xicai's *yao*. Wanyou, after hearing my comment, became quite serious, which I did not expect, and told me *how* Xicai was able to do so as if I was probing an explanation. Wanyou said: "You know why? You don't know why. Xicai's brother-in-law works in Xi'an and he is in charge of distributing building materials for a big project. Xicai is certainly better off than others because his brother-in-law will give him everything he needs. Otherwise, Xicai is unable to paint his wall. How could he be able to paint it without his brother-in-law's help? Who is going to give him the chunk of white clay and other things? No way. It is his brother-in-law who paints the wall, let me tell you." Later on, I found out that this is not a personal view of Wanyou's and quite a few villagers with whom I talked about Xicai's wall made similar comments. Xicai denied this by saying, "Oh, shit. Who is going to Xi'an (the capital of the province) to get the white clay? I got it from the town market and asked Wanbin's (my host in Dawa) son to help me to do it."

There are some implications. Firstly, Zhao villagers are not only engaged in economic activities, but also make explanations about what they do. In other words, by commenting on their own actions, Zhao villagers also produce interpretations of their own practices. Secondly,

Zhao villagers seem to accept the fact that some brothers are or would become better off than others, but they refuse to see individual villagers as having equal relations with the outside world. Economic differentiation is in turn supposed to be explained by the connections of social relationships. It is not important where Xicai actually obtained his materials for his wall decoration; what is important is the way in which Zhao villagers try to explain how it was possible or impossible. In general, Zhao villagers see the society as differentiated, both economically and politically, but the differences between brothers cannot be accepted as they are; rather, these differences have to be explained by a particular 'reason'. This reason has to be something beyond one's own ability. Luck, as a notion that Zhao villagers apply to explain the land re-distribution in 1981, has no place in explaining why some brothers are better off than others. This appears to be a paradox: what Zhao villagers agree upon in general seems to be what they deny in any specific case. In general, they see the society as socially differentiated, that is, different people in different places own different economic power. If someone is located in a bad place, it is because he or she has bad 'luck' in comparison to those who stay in better places. However, regarding any specific case of a better-off brother, Zhao villagers deny the role of 'luck' and explain economic advantage or competence in terms of social and political power. Thirdly, Zhao villagers do not look at the possibilities of increasing productivity; instead, they look at the possibilities of increasing the production of social relations. They do not talk much about possible differences between individuals in terms of ability and capability, but they talk about these differences in terms of ability and capability of making and maintaining various kinds of social ties. Power lies in the connections of the social relations one maintains. Let us have a look at another case study.

Case 7.4 Famin's story of trying to be prosperous

Famin was my third host in the village and was thirty two years old in 1992. His family was a big family, five brothers and five (or six) sisters from the same parents. Famin saw his family as powerless in both economic and political terms. His connection with the outside world is mainly through brothers and relatives. One of Famin's sisters worked in Urumqi, the Xinjiang Autonomous District, in the north-west of China. In order to earn some cash, in winter 1987, Famin went to Urumqi to look for work, and hoped that his sister and brother-in-law may help, since there was little to do in the field in winter. Famin stayed in Urumqi for about half a year, while basically working for a construction team and taking various small jobs as a labourer. Famin did not want to work as a labourer but could not find other kinds of jobs, so he decided to leave Xinjiang and returned to the village in 1988. After Famin returned, he made another effort to earn cash. He managed to get a contract from the village committee to operate a stone mine for a year. The production involves collecting and milling stones from the mine for construction purposes. A contractor is responsible for the management of the mine and is liable to pay a small license fee. Again, Famin, as he said, failed to make a profit. The reason that Famin gave for his economic failure was that he had no connections outside the village. As he said:[14]

"I thought of going to Urumqi because my sister was there. She and my brother-in-law may help or they may know some people who might help me, I thought. So I went. I had a hard time there. The work was so hard that I could hardly manage. I worked at a construction site as a labourer. Both my sister and my brother-in-law didn't know many people, they didn't know any official, so they couldn't find me anything better than a labourer's work. The work was too hard to bear, so I ran away. I did not make any money. When I came back to the village, I saw other people making a good amount of money by milling stones. I managed to make a contract with

[14]This talk is reconstructed from my recording of a talk with Famin, though similar comments made by Famin appeared in other talks I had with him.

the village committee to operate a stone mine, with the help of my brothers, you know I have many brothers in the village. The village committee was reluctant to give me the contract at the beginning but my eldest brother is a good friend of the village head. He went to talk to him. I also asked Wancai, my *zijiawu* brother, to talk to Xincai, the party secretary, because they used to stay in the army together. That is how I got it but I could not work it out when I was running the mine, because I did not know anybody who was in charge of a construction project. If the contractors know the right people, they do not even need to work, they sit there, talking and smoking, but they can still make a profit, because they have connections and know the people who are in charge of construction projects. Although construction sites always need stones, nobody wanted to take my stones. I worked hard myself and my stones were better quality but, still, no one wanted them. People do not want your things if they do not know you. All my brothers are ordinary peasants and we do not know people outside the village, so we cannot make it work. Even if I wanted to give gifts to the people who control the construction sites, I would not know where to find these powerful people. Even if I had gifts, I would not know where to find their doors! We have no connections at all. We are peasants. Ordinary peasants."

Clearly, there are other tones in Famin's statement. For instance, there is a complaint about being a peasant in this region, who is thought of as powerless.[15] However, the main theme of this speech is to address the significance of *'guanxi'* (the Chinese term for social relationship) in business activities or economic competence. In Famin's speech, *guanxi* is not only meant to be part of business activities; rather, it determines such activities. In his account of social relationships, Famin talked about various kinds of relationships including kinship. For instance, he talked about friendship, colleagueship and even acquaintances that his sister and brother-in-law might have had. Famin did not address his speech to a particular audience - not to his *zijiawu*, neighbours or relatives. Nor did he even address it to the government or its local agents. In my view, Famin addressed his complaint to the general conditions, associated with the economic reforms and macro power relations, which have swept rural China since the late 1970s.

To Zhao villagers, although there are differences among people, there is no difference in terms of how to get rich: anyone who is 'lucky' is so because he has a closer relationship with someone else. Zhao villagers accept that society is always socially and economically stratified but they refuse to accept that the wealth of a particular brother is not generated by a particular *guanxi* he obtains within or outside the village. Social or political power in the form of *guanxi* as explanation to Zhao villagers is what witchcraft as cause is to Azande (Evans-Pritchard 1937). Zhao villagers admit that there are always difference in terms of living standards among *zijiawu* brothers, but they do not accept that this difference will have occurred to a particular person without a 'reason', a power, a particular *guanxi* behind him. Nobody is luckier than others in this sense. Chance does not work on particular persons. To Zhao villagers, it must be certain powers which put someone in a privileged position. Zhao villagers, if they do not benefit from this power, are very critical of it.

Specifically, the village cadres, who are by no means all significantly better off than others (at least to my eyes), are thought to be corrupt by Zhao villagers, because they see no reason that one should not explore possible benefits from the privileged position that the village

[15]In many areas along the south-east coast, peasants may live better than those who stay in the cities in the 1980s. Those who are called 'peasant-entrepreneurs' have occupied much room in newspaper columns in recent years.

cadres hold.[16] For Zhao villagers, there is no mystery: it is power that generates wealth which in turn creates power. Unlike what is portrayed by the government slogan - 'let some people get rich first' - Zhao villagers do not see the economic development or accumulation of wealth as being arranged along a time table (one after another: everyone gets rich in the end). Instead, they see economic opportunities and wealth as being located in different geographic spaces, which in turn define social status. Spatial images thus obtain their political significance and outside forces are taken as the ultimate source for social and economic change.

7.3 The Politics of Birth Control

In recent years, some scholars have paid their attention to the changing relationship between the village cadres and ordinary villagers, and examined the role of village cadres in terms of their capability to control social and economic resources, which often leads to corruption (see for instance Oi 1989a, 1989b). In more general terms, some scholars argue that, as a consequence of the economic reforms, a re-ordering of the relationship between state and society, between the cadres and the masses, takes place (see for instance Shue 1988). Both approaches focus on the division between village cadres and ordinary villagers as two distinguishable social categories, but overlook the possible reversal of the roles played by the two. My materials suggest that there is no clear division between the two groups in terms of the roles they play and in terms of the power that one group can exercise over another. Rather, power is a *relation* located in 'complex strategical situations'. It depends on to whom and under what circumstance political power is exercised. At different moments, both village cadres and ordinary villagers are part of a changing set of power relations; they act upon and, at the same time, are acted upon by each other.

In my view, there are two significant structural changes in terms of political organisation in the village. First, the structure of the present political organisation can be represented as a 'slope', which is in contrast to that of the past, which was a triangle (see Figure 9). There is no mutual support between the party organisation and the village organisations. Zhao villagers see their own village as being an anarchy. According to Zhao villagers, the present state of the village is a polity without policies - there is no rule, no regulation, no policy, no governing body in the village which is functioning. Its only politics is to implement the birth control policy. The birth control policy was said to be the only existing policy. To carry out the birth control policy is the main task of the village cadres. As Zhao villagers often said, the birth control policy was the only 'hard' *(ying)* policy in the 1990s. Second, the exercise of political control takes a new form. The two classic methods of the Maoist style of mass campaigns - 'mass meetings' and 'work-teams' (Crook and Crook 1979; Hinton 1966; Chan et al. 1984) - have lost their power in the re-ordering the village society. Below, I shall first examine how birth control policy is carried out in Zhaojiahe, to show how both the village cadres and ordinary villagers modify their strategies of

[16] I am not saying that there is no corruption in the village (see below); rather, what I try to say is that both corruption and the interpretation of corruption represent the same force of transformation: social and political power is conceptually linked with accumulation of wealth. In so doing, Zhao villagers have paid less attention than they could to possible improvement of production.

everyday politics. And then I shall turn to examine how an attempt to apply the Maoist machinery of political control fails to reach any end.

According to Zhao villagers, the birth control policy is the only remaining policy that needs to be complied with. As they said, if you did not have more children than required, you would have no problem, or, if you did not have more children than required, you would be forgotten by the government. Wanyou once said to me, "Nowadays, there is no policy, so everyone does whatever they want. Nobody intervenes. All policies are 'soft' (*'ruan'*) except for the birth control policy which is the only 'hard' policy. The village cadres are told that they are allowed to use any kind of means to keep the number of births under control. Any kind of self-created method will be allowed as long as it can curb population growth. That is the only policy that exists today."

The current local birth control policy, by which I mean what was understood by Zhao villagers and what they intended to comply with, includes the following points: i) one couple should have only one child; ii) if the baby is a girl, the couple will be allowed to have another try under the conditions a) there must be an interval of five years between the first and the second birth, b) the mother after her second birth-giving must go for a sterilisation operation, and c) the couple will still be subject to a fine of 400 *yuan* for the second birth;[17] iii) under no condition is a third birth allowed.

In order to produce efficient means of contraception and sterilisation, women in the village are supplied with either free or low-cost heath care from the 'Hospital for Maternal and Child Hygiene' in the county town. Sterilisation is thought to be the crucial means of controlling the growth of village population, although some women, especially those who have only girls, are reluctant to have the operation. Doctors at the 'Hospital for Maternal and Child Hygiene' in the town are available at any time of the year to perform the operation. Apart from this, twice a year, in spring and autumn, Leijiawa Xiang government officials will come down to the village with a list of names of those who should go for the operation, and pick those women up and bring them to the township clinic to have the operation. This list of names is supposed to be supplied by the village cadres. In order to carry out this operation, the officials and cadres may use coercion. Some villagers reported that they (to be precise, their wives) would rather be willing to go for the operation in the town by themselves because, otherwise, they might be caught in their beds, thrown onto a truck, and forced to accept the operation of sterilisation.

If a villager tries to avoid the operation, the village cadres are encouraged to take whatever measures possible to enforce the birth control policy. In the neighbouring areas of Zhaojiahe, the village cadres have created their own characteristic means of implementing the birth control policy since the 1980s: *po-chan* (literally, 'bankrupt' or 'bankruptcy'). *Pochan* means to confiscate one's property until one 'surrenders', that is, to comply with the policy. To illustrate how a *pochan* can be done, there is a widely told story that is worth recording here.

Case 7.5 'Bankruptcy'

In 1989, a village school teacher and his wife in Liujiahe, a nearby village, decided to have another try at pregnancy despite already having had two daughters. While teaching, the teacher

[17]This figure was only applicable to the period of 1990-1991.

was also operating a small retail shop selling daily goods such as cigarettes, wines and spirits, sweets, washing powder, stationary, etc. According to Zhao villagers, the teacher knew what kind of danger was ahead of him but he desperately wanted a son. In order to try to have his third baby - hopefully it would be a boy - the teacher asked his wife, together with their two little daughters, to leave the village to hide, in order to avoid being caught in the village by the village cadres. The teacher himself also closed his shop, locked his door and moved to live in another village of his relatives.

Failing to find where the teacher was but definitely knowing he was preparing to have another child, the village cadres brought a group of policemen from the Xiang government and sent a group of scoundrels[18] to *bankrupt* (confiscate) the teacher's property. The policemen and scoundrels led by the village cadres broke into the teacher's house and took everything removable and put them on a truck, including the teacher's personal belongings such as a pair of sofas, a radio, and anything that could possible be carried away from his house as well as commodities from his retail shop - biscuits, candy, washing powder, wines and spirits, and so forth. According to Zhao villagers, under this circumstance, the teacher *had* to return to Liujiahe and ask his wife to go for an abortion followed by a sterilisation operation. His wife came back to the village with a pregnancy of five months but had to go to have both an abortion and a sterilisation operation under the supervision of the village cadres. As Zhao villagers said, the teacher did this in order to get his property and commodities back. The village cadres agreed to return his property and commodities to him after his wife had the operation, but the teacher was not able to claim all his things back because those (the policemen and scoundrels) who had taken his things away proclaimed that they had consumed most of the wines, cigarettes, and other kinds of things which were edible on the way, while transporting them to the Xiang government.

By telling this story, Zhao villagers stress the point that bankruptcy is an irresistible means of punishment. In Zhaojiahe, no case of severe bankruptcy, as in the above example, occurred in recent years. But some kind of confiscation did happen when I was there. A far *zijiawu* brother of Famin, Xiaoqing, in Dongbang, who had two daughters and still wanted another son, was in trouble in March 1992. Xincai (the party secretary) and Yangkai (the village head),[19] together with the local officials from Leijiawa Xiang government, knocked Xiaoqing's *yuanzi* door down and broke into his house in the middle of the night. The village cadres took some of Xiaoqing's furniture out and put it on the truck that the local officials drove to the village. The furniture was returned to Xiaoqing two weeks later after his wife's sterilisation operation was done. This event took place in March of 1992 when a team of local government officials came down to Zhaojiahe to carry out their regular inspection. The following example describes my experience of this event.

Case 7.6 The raid by the birth control officials

In March of 1992, an ordinary early evening with a soft wind and sunshine, I went back to Dawa from the main village at a leisurely pace. Villagers were still in the fields or had gone to the town for the market day and the atmosphere in Dawa was tranquil and peaceful. Suddenly, I was almost knocked over by a running woman: the daughter-in-law of my host dashed out of the door, buttoning up her upper-coat while running towards the other side of the village. She did not even say 'hello' to me, which was very unusual because she always did so. More than that, she never went anywhere with an unbuttoned coat. I was a little puzzled by what I saw but I could not work out what was happening. When I went in, nothing unusual seemed to have taken place. My host had gone to the town and was not yet back, and his wife had gone to the field. The grandmother stayed at home with two little babies as usual. I went out again. Standing by the door and looking around, I gradually felt that a strange atmosphere was prevailing, replacing the tranquillity of the village with anxiety, penetrating the quiet dusk. A sense of anxiety, worry, or even fear can be felt, breathed, and smelled. It was too quiet to be a normal evening. All the

[18]The term Zhao villagers used was 'Er-dan'. Er-dan are people who loath work and know no rule in human relationships.

[19]Both the village head and one of Wanbin's *zijiawu* brothers are called Yangkai.

young women who like to sit in front of their doors chatting with each other disappeared. All of a sudden, I saw my host's daughter-in-law again, turning up from nowhere, in front of me, under my nose, holding her younger baby in her arms. The grandmother shouted behind me, "Hurry up, bastard, fuck!' The daughter-in-law hastily ran away. Some villagers now returned from the field and they went home straight away silently. It started to get dark and I went back to my room. No sooner had I opened my notebook and started to write than my host, with an expressionless face, came into my room, asking to borrow my electric torch, and left quickly without a single word, although I knew he had just come back from the town market. Then, there were some noises in the yard, the clattering of bicycles and some low voices, both male and female. Some people left home. From the following morning, I did not see the daughter-in-law and her younger baby for a whole week.

The next day, I was told that the 'birth control officials' from Leijiawa (the township) had raided the village the previous night. They caught a few women who did not have their sterilisation operations. One was Xiaoqing's wife. Four of these women were brought to the township clinic in the night and were forced to accept the operation the following morning. They also had to pay a fine which was said to be used to maintain the expenses of the officials' action.

The daughter-in-law of Wanbin, Zunxia, had already two daughters but she and her husband, Xincang, wanted a son. In order to avoid being raided by the local officials, my host helped his daughter-in-law who carried her younger daughter to run away, staying with one of Zunxia's aunts in another village for almost two weeks. Before the local officials came, Wanbin's family had been informed by both the village head and the party secretary that there was going to be a raid. The village head, Yangkai, was the husband of Zunxia's sister, so Yangkai and Zunxia's husband, Xincang, are *danzhang* (those who marry sisters). Yangkai got the news that local officials would come to the village in the afternoon from the party secretary who had joined a meeting in the township government earlier. Immediately, Yangkai reported this to his wife and asked her to tell her sister, Zunxia. So, in the late afternoon, Zunxia heard this news from her sister's daughter. The time I met Zunxia, when she was running to the other side of the village, was the time she had just heard the news. She ran to the field to find her mother-in-law in order to let her know. At the same time, Xincai, the party secretary, happened to meet Wanbin in the town and also told him that there was going to be a raid and Zunxia should be careful. Wanbin therefore ran home to help.

Zunxia must have also passed the message to other villagers in Dawa, since, in the following week of the raid, all of a sudden, the little babies in Dawa all disappeared. Young wives started to return with their little babies in about a week's time. During the raid, the local officials visited some households in Dawa but no violence was reported. I did not hear that there was anybody who came into my host's courtyard in the night.

The day after the raid, Wanyou's daughter came to see her father and commented upon the raid: "I am never against the birth control policy set by the state. It actually has nothing to do with us. But to talk about this raid, I have to say something. In Zhaojiahe, the village cadres always focus on particular people but not on particular things. If something is wrong, something that breaches the government rules, I have no problem at all agreeing with the view that the people who did it should be punished. But the village cadres should not treat different people differently. Take my Ganma ('adopted mother')'s son, Xiaoqing, as an example. He has two daughters and his wife was forced to have the operation. That is fine. But they came in the night with policemen, flashing their big electric torches and knocking their doors down while the whole family were sleeping. Xiaoqing's wife therefore had to have the operation. Even then, the cadres still took his things away. My Ganma was begging them to stop, crying for the whole day. While, look at Leikai on the other hand, just because he used to work in the town and he still has some connections with the people in the town. His son also has two children but nobody dares to get close to his house. Leikai said, 'whoever dares come into my house, I will break his legs!' This is what I do not like. People are treated differently. The poorer, the more powerless, the worse."

This is a key comment that reveals the change in the exercise of political power. According to Zhao villagers, during the Maoist era, although it was sometimes even more violent and coercive, the political coercion focused upon only a few who had already been classified as 'five black categories', and the majority of the villagers, those poor and lower-middle peasants,[20] were never troubled. While, during the period of the economic reforms, the mode of political control changed. According to Zhao villagers, anyone could be the target of a political exercise in the early 1990s. Whether one is to be punished depends on a series of elements among which the most important is one's *guanxi* networks. Social relationships not only determine business opportunities but also decide whether a punishment should be given. Establishing and maintaining different kinds of social relationships - especially connections outside the village - have thus gained a great social significance. The village cadres are more conscious of whom they are dealing with on the one hand and, on the other, Zhao villagers in general are also more conscious of whom they are making alliances with. Coercion is still there but it is oriented selectively towards particular groups of people under particular conditions.

The birth control policy is a 'hard' policy, but it is not a 'hard' policy to everyone in the same way. Both the village cadres and ordinary villagers are aware that they are dealing with the changing relations of power. I argue that both the village cadres and ordinary villagers employ the same strategy in seeking different political ends. The village cadres have to comply with the policies instructed by the local government in certain ways, but they also try to distance themselves from the local officials. When the local officials come down to the village, the village cadres have to help these officials find out who does not follow the government rule. But, on the other hand, the village cadres also try to avoid confronting a large number of their *zijiawu* brothers. They are very careful about whom they should help the officials find out. For instance, even though Xincai and Wanbin were hostile to each other (see Case 7.1), Xincai still informed Wanbin about the raid beforehand, sending a signal of being friendly. The ordinary villagers are very critical of the village cadres but they seldom confront the cadres directly. Although some villagers claim that they are not afraid of any village cadre, most of the villagers will send their wives away when there is a raid.

Because both parties, those who implement the policy and those upon whom the policy is implemented, have adopted the same strategy, of which a crucial characteristic is to differentiate between people, the birth control policy - or any other state policy there may be - cannot be installed to its full extent. If they want to, Zhao villagers can always manage to have more children. Most of the villagers have their own sources of obtaining certain kinds of warning before any official action takes place. It leaves the powerless (in all senses of the term) to be chosen as the scapegoats to be punished, because the village cadres have to report something to their superiors.

Table 6 shows the actual number of children of each household in Dawa. If we divide Dawa households into two groups, we will see that those who are over forty five, have in average more children. For this group, including Xinyun, Liucai, Yongsheng and Wanbin, the average

[20]More than 90% of Zhao villagers were classified as poor and middle-lower peasants in the early 1950s.

number of children is between 3 and 4. While, for the rest, those whose age can roughly categorised as 'under forty', no one has more than three children. There is a demographic change in terms of number of children that each couple bear, which I believe is also true in many other parts of China.[21] However, the interesting aspect of this new demographic distribution in Zhaojiahe is that, no matter whether one has two or three children, no one does not have a son. Zhao villagers would comply with the birth control policy, only under the condition that they have at least one son among their two or three children. That is, if the birth order is like this: m-m, or, f-m, or, m-f, Zhao villagers will stop having more children. Otherwise, they would continue their trying. Among the four cases (from the under forty group) in which the couple have three children, three of them have the same birth pattern: f-f-m. Lucai's case may be slightly different since he is caught up between two generations. If Lucai is taken as belonging to the old generation, this pattern clearly shows that the demand of having a son is still the main demographic concern for Zhao villagers.

Table 5. Numbers of Children of Each Household in Dawa

Head of the Household	Age of the Husband and His Wife in 1992	No. of Children	No. of Adopted Children
a) Yangkai	38, 36	2: m, m	1: f
b) Jinchang	34, 34	3: f, f, m	/
c) Jinkai	32, 34	2: m, m	/
d) Xinyun	48, 48	3: f, m, f	/
e) Jincang	31, 28	2: m, m	/
f) Liucai	65, 62	4: m, m, m, f	/
g) Shanghe	36, 35	2: f, m	/
h) Mannian	29, 29	2: m, f	/
i) Ruolin	40, 38	2: f, m	/
j) Yongsheng	64, 54	4: f, f, m, m	/
k) Wancheng	34, 34	2: m, m	/
l) Sanbao	39, 37	2: m, f	/
m) Xicai	35, 33	3: f, f, m	/
n) Wanbin	47, 45	4: m, m, f, m	/
o) Wanbao	42, 41	2: m, f	/
p) Moucai	29, 28	2: m, m	/
q) Gencai	33, 33	3: f, f, m	/
r) Xincai	36, 36	2: f, m	/
s) Lucai	40, 40	3: f, m, m	/

My argument is that even the birth control policy is no longer a 'hard' policy, because there is no more a clear division between those who exert power on others and those upon whom power is exerted. Both the village cadres and ordinary villagers are caught up in an alterable, changing set of power relations. In order to reach the political end one wishes, one has to differentiate people according to different situations. In the case of Zhaojiahe, I argue that this is a transitional period in which everyone is cautious in respect to seeking economic advantage and political allies. Although a new form of political control is still under way, the Maoist style of

[21]For a discussion of 'fertility norms and family size' in China, see Croll 1985. For an elaborate discussion with reference to P. R. C.'s 'changing population', see Banister 1987, 1984.

revolution has entirely lost its grounds. The fate of a socialist education work-team in Zhaojiahe tells us how the Maoist spirit of revolution has been buried in the past decade.

7.4 The Fate of the Socialist Education Work-Team

In the spring of 1991, Zhao villagers started to talk about a 'socialist education movement', which was the first political campaign that took place in the village after 1981. This political campaign was meant to imitate the form and functions of the first 'socialist education campaign' in 1964-65.[22] The official media called this campaign 'the second socialist education movement' which was carried out very differently according to different regional (provincial) preferences and targets. In spring 1992, Deng Xiaoping travelled to south China and made a famous speech, arguing for further reforms and economic development. After Deng's trip to south China, little news about the second socialist education movement appeared in the official media.

In Chengcheng County, the socialist education movement was carried out from one area to another. It started in the spring of 1990 with *yuanshang* villages. Zhaojiahe was not sent any work-team until January 1992, but Zhao villagers started to talk about the work-team much earlier. A story was passed from one to another and they prepared themselves for the coming of the work-team. The story was about the experience of Huang, a villager from a neighbouring village, Xifeng. Huang had a large orchard, mainly of apples. He was one of the first few peasants in the area to plant apple trees several years ago and made a remarkable profit afterwards. It was said that, when the socialist education work-team went to Xifeng in 1991, they did not carry out their work properly but rather kept thinking about how they could ask for some free apples from Huang. Although some members of the team implied that they would like to taste Huang's apples, Huang pretended that he did not receive the message. According to Zhao villagers, Huang said, he could not present his apples to the socialist education work-team because the socialist education work-team went to Xifeng to clean up corruption. As Huang said, if he did so, the team would have been said to be corrupt. When the socialist education work-team was preparing to leave Xifeng, the village head went to visit Huang and asked him whether he could provide some apples for the team, because everyone knew he was a well-known apple expert in the area. Since it was the cadres from Huang's own village who asked for apples, Huang agreed. Then the members of the socialist education work-team came to Huang's house, taking several boxes of apples away without paying a penny. When telling this story, Zhao villagers often repeated the question: "How could they (the work-team) not even weigh those apples that they took?" By telling this story, Zhao villagers had portrayed the socialist education work-team as greedy and gluttonous.

* * *

The socialist education work-team, a team of seven men, came down to Zhaojiahe in the first week of March 1992. The members of the team were all from a neighbouring township,

[22]For translations of documents of this campaign, see Baum and Teiwes 1968. For a detailed discussion of how this campaign was carried out in a Chinese village, see Chan et al. 1984: 41-73.

Jiaodao Xiang (see Map 5). The leader of the team was a Xiang (township) official, who was in charge of Jiaodao township militia training, which was not thought to be an important position by Zhao villagers. As soon as the team arrived, Zhao villagers started to tell each other where the members of the team came from and what they were. In particular, Zhao villagers passed the message to each other that, among seven members of the team, there were three of them who were 'simply' peasants.[23] The socialist education work-team came to Zhaojiahe very quietly and there was not even a meeting or anything to acknowledge it, although the village cadres and party members had been briefed earlier. Later, the socialist education work-team announced the purpose and aim of this campaign by way of written declarations on several blackboards established by the team members after their arrival. It was announced that the team would 'squat' (i.e. stay to work) in Zhaojiahe for one hundred and forty days, which would last till mid-July. The task of the team was written, very briefly, on the blackboards: the first stage was to make socialist propaganda, aiming to show the advantages of socialism in China; the second stage was to square village accounts and to attack (or to deal with) local criminals in order to produce a peaceful social milieu; the third stage was to rebuild village roads and to reshuffle the village leadership group. As planned, it was said that each stage should have taken about forty days.

Each villager group was assigned one member from the work-team, who was arranged to be accommodated by one family but eat in turn from one household to another. A work-team member, whose surname was Fan, was assigned to Dawa and he lived with Wangbao's family. Dawa villagers called him Lao Fan (Elder Fan).[24] At first, Dawa villagers showed a tremendous interest in discovering Lao Fan's background - who he was, what he did and what kind of officials he was - and the villagers passed what they had found to each other at their earliest convenience. A few minutes after Lao Fan came to Dawa, every villager knew that Lao Fan was 'simply a peasant'. Dawa villagers started to investigate how Lao Fan could have managed to be a work-team member. Among others, Wanbin, my host in Dawa, was one of the most enthusiastic information gatherers. In the second evening after Lao Fan came to Dawa, Wanbin went to tell Wanyou, Wanbin's *zijiawu* brother, how Lao Fan managed to get into the team. When I was chatting with Wanyou that evening about the wedding arrangements, Wanbin came in and started to tell Wanyou what he knew about Lao Fan: "Lao Fan is just a peasant! Because he lived just a few yards away from the headquarters of the village committee, he got familiar with the village cadres. Sometimes, there are Xiang officials coming to his village, because his house is nearby, Lao Fan is often asked to host these officials for lunch. So, Lao Fan has become familiar with Jiaodao Xiang officials. Because these Xiang officials have eaten Lao Fan (i.e. Lao Fan's lunches), they feel that they should have returned him something, so they have appointed him a post with the work-team. The work-team members eat free from one family to another, and they also have a salary of seventy five yuan per month. Lao Fan is certainly happy about that".

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[23]When writing about the work-team who came to Chen village in Guangdong in 1965 during the first Socialist Education Campaign, Chan (et al.) described the insistence of anonymity about the team members that the work-team imposed upon the villagers. Among the three reasons given, the last one is that, "since most of the work-team members were from nearby counties or communes, anonymity would render them less vulnerable to rumour mongering", 1984: 42.

[24]It is a common practice for Chinese people to call others by adding either Lao (elder) or Xiao (younger) to their surnames. In this case, it is more customary than respectful.

Wanyou in turn passed this information to other villagers. According to Dawa villagers, to be a work-team member is a favour, a privilege, a convenience, because the work-team members eat free and earn salaries.

I met Lao Fan a few days later when he came to visit me in my room. When I was writing my diary, Lao Fan came in. He was about fifty years old, with a grey beard. He wore a blue Mao suit on which two eye-catching shining pens were stuck to his upper pocket on the left. He spoke mandarin. Lao Fan did not ask any question about what I was doing there. Instead, he started to talk about himself, saying that he was an 'educationalist' in Jiaodao. When I asked what he actually did, he hesitated and was a little reluctant to tell me what he had done, only vaguely reiterating that he was working as an educationalist. Later I talked about this to Wanbin and his wife; Wanbin said quietly, "He is a farce. Lao Fan taught at the village school for a few years. Almost everyone had that experience. How dare he say that he is an 'educationalist'?" Yin'ai, Wanbin's wife, was more direct with her disgust: "What an educationalist! He is a peasant! Just a peasant!" This obvious hostility towards the work-team somehow indicated the difficulty that Lao Fan and his comrades would face later on.

When there was nothing left to gossip about Lao Fan's past, Dawa villagers became critical of Lao Fan's behaviour, that is, Lao Fan's way of eating. Lao Fan was arranged, as on other occasions, to eat from one household to another in turn. In Zhaojiahe, if there is a need to host an official for a period of time, it is always arranged for the official to have his meals from one family to another, no matter what kind of tasks this official is supposed to carry out. For instance, the school teachers do not cook for themselves but eat from one pupil's family to another. How many days one pupil has to feed his teachers (five in the case of Zhaojiahe) depends on how many pupils are registered at the village school. There is an egalitarian principle with regard to this arrangement.[25] This arrangement of being hosted from one household to another allowed Lao Fan to talk to different villagers; it also made it possible for Dawa villagers to observe how Lao Fan behaved at dining tables.

Soon after Lao Fan arrived, Dawa villagers started to comment on Lao Fan's table manners. In particular, Lao Fan was criticised for two things which were thought of as impolite and inappropriate. First, Lao Fan was said to eat too much. It was said that Lao Fan was eating as if it was the first time that he was given the chance to have free meals. Dawa villagers then started to talk about how big their steamed breads were and how many pieces of steamed bread Lao Fan was able to eat. Second, some said that Lao Fan required a meal three times a day. Zhao villagers, apart from the busiest periods in summer or the New Year's period, eat only twice a day.[26] Mingfang, Xicai's wife, after hosting Lao Fan, told others, "Don't look at Lao Fan who looks like an old man, he eats like a young labourer. He asks for three meals a day and he eats a lot. He eats at least three, sometimes four, pieces of steamed bread. You know the bread I make. They are always huge and my Xicai is not able to eat that much every day, plus my Xicai works in the

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[25]This is a principle that Zhao villagers would turn to on many other occasions. For instance, Dawa villagers, the male representative of the household, to be precise, take turns to be the group leader (not the village cadres).

[26]For a discussion of how daily meals are arranged and the significance of food and table manners, see Chapter 4.

field. Lao Fan is doing nothing but is really good at digestion. We do not see him going to the loo, what a good stomach!" This by no means proves that Lao Fan is an impolite guest who behaves badly. What it shows is rather the attitude towards the work-team.

In the first stage of the socialist education campaign, the only visible change was that slogans were painted on the village walls, such as 'Socialism is good', 'China must go through a socialist route', 'To build a great country with four modernisations', 'To deepen the economic reform', and so forth. These slogans, which were painted with white clay, were put on by either the team members or party members of the village. Apart from slogans, several self-made small blackboards were established on walls around the village, which were supposed to be used for announcements and propaganda. However, most of these small blackboards were never in use. For instance, the one in Dawa was used only once in March, when the work-team had just arrived, to announce the three stages that the campaign was supposed to go through. The work-team also prepared each group an 'opinion collection box' *(yi-jian-xiang)* which was meant to be used for collecting the villagers' criticism of their leaders. The total number of notes of criticism that the work-team collected from all seven villager groups was only one, which complained about a daughter-in-law.

* * *

In order to carry out the campaign, the work-team organised several mass meetings. During the period of people' communes, the mass meetings were thought to be the most effective means of carrying out any kind of political ends. As a villager remembered, "In the past, nothing was like now. Whenever there was a meeting, even if you did not finish your meal, you would have to throw your bowl away and go to join the meeting. A meeting was a command". In the early 1990s, the mass meeting method seems to be falling apart.

Case 7.7 The first mass meeting in Dawa since 1981

One early evening in March, at about six thirty, I heard somebody beating a gong and shouting from the other side of Dawa, "there is a meeting tonight", "there is a meeting tonight!" I went out to look and found out that it was Wancheng who was the group leader by then. The meeting was going to be held in his house. About a hour or so later, when I finished my note taking, the gong and shouting appeared again. I was wondering, hesitant, whether I should join the meeting by myself or follow my host. I went to see Wanbin in his *yao;* he just came back from somewhere having his tea with such leisure, as if he did not hear anything. I retreated into my room and stayed for about another half hour, and then the sound of the gong was in the air again with no difference from the previous times in terms of tones and pitches. I became a little anxious since I did not want to miss it - the first mass meeting in the past ten years. However, when I went to see Wanbin in his house, he was still smoking his pipe and sipping his tea. Finally, I could not hold up my question after sitting at the edge of his bed for quite a while: "Are you going to join the meeting at all?" His reply was calm and affirmative: "Not in a hurry". The fourth time the gong split the air, Wanbin started to move, and I followed him to Wancheng's house. When we got into Wancheng's *yao,* I found that my host and I were in fact the very first two to be there except for one villager who was sleeping in a dark corner. It was about eight thirty and Wancheng started to go to each household to catch people. Dawa villagers turned out gradually and reluctantly. Each family sent a representative, either male or female. Half of the representatives were women who came and sat on the bed, some with their children. Another half hour later, the meeting began. Wancheng made a short introduction and then Lao Fan started to read something from his notebook. Something about the purposes and methods of the campaign. While they were talking, a local opera was played loudly on TV, and the suggestion to turn it off was overruled by those who wanted to watch. Dawa villagers kept talking to each other and commenting on the performance of the opera on TV while Lao Fan was making his

speech. Children's cries broke Lao Fan's monologue from time to time together with the women's angry and impatient words to their children: "I'll screw your mother! Stop crying, fuck!" "Fuck your grandmother, stop that nonsense!" It did not sound unusual for any villager who attended the meeting. Lao Fan was apparently deaf to all of these noises and continued his reading quietly and peacefully. It was Wancheng who once said to the audience: "Could you keep quiet for a while when others were speaking?" He was ignored. The villager who slept in the dark corner started to snore, and he suddenly woke up, appearing to be very angry, questioning Lao Fan about the tobacco tax that was introduced one year ago by the Xiang government. Lao Fan looked perplexed and had to stop to explain what he did not mention at all. After Lao Fan finished his speech, which was about thirty minutes long, the villagers were asked to give their opinions about the campaign and express their views about the present situation of the village. Those who had kept talking since they came into the room suddenly became silent as if their tongues were lost. Without seeking for agreement, someone switched off the television. An incredible, almost unbearable, silence froze the air of the room. Even children who had been blamed by their mothers stopped making noises. No one seemed to breath, let alone say anything. Several times, Wancheng asked them to say something, their hopes and worries. The reaction was an even heavier silence. For a very long period of time, there was simply no one who said anything. Although Dawa villagers criticised the village cadres all the time and they seriously attacked the present status of the society privately, no villagers spoke a word at this meeting. Remaining more than an hour in silence, women started to make excuses to leave. The meeting continued till midnight but reached no conclusion.

Following this meeting, there was another meeting two months later in Dawa, which I did not attend since I had already moved away from Dawa to Nanjian. I was told by Dawa villagers that the second meeting became violent. When discussing some practical issues such as rebuilding the village road, Dawa villagers were divided into two sides. Some villagers, especially those who owned or prepared to buy small tractors, suggested to Lao Fan that the village road should be completely rebuilt since it was too narrow and inconvenient, while others, those who did not care too much about the road, were reluctant to pay for the rebuilding. The quarrel between the two sides turned into a fight. Two middle-aged villagers threw themselves on each other and fought. Although there was no definite agreement reached, both sides blamed Lao Fan for his bringing the question into discussion.

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After several group meetings, a whole village mass meeting was organised. The village mass meeting was meant to solve problems shared by different villager groups. A particular aim of this meeting was to allow the village committee to report how it had managed public expenditure in the past few years. Zhao villagers had a great deal of complaints about the corruption of the village cadres, and accused the village cadres of having stolen public money from the village.

Case 7.8 The whole village mass meeting

The only whole village mass meeting was held in April, which was organised in the village headquarters, a large courtyard - twice or three times as large as an ordinary courtyard. A long table, with a white cloth cover, was set at one side of the yard, where the village cadres and the team members were supposed to sit. In fact, there were only three people who took the seats at the table - the party secretary and two members of the team. One of the team members leaned onto the table, burying his head in his own arms, and never raised his head through the whole session of the meeting, as if he was forced to sit in front of the table and he dared not look at the villagers. As at the Dawa meeting, Zhao villagers turned up at a relaxed pace, as if they were going to a market. Women held their little babies in arms.

The headquarters was divided by five clay lines into seven segments which were supposed to be taken by seven villager groups accordingly. Within each group, men and women

sat in separate circles. Children were with their mothers, playing, screaming and crying. After several failed, impossible attempts to stop the noises, Xincai, the party secretary, wearing a pair of huge, dark sun-glasses although it was a gloomy, cloudy afternoon, started his speech by reading a Mao-style introduction about the progress of socialist China. Meanwhile, the voices of Zhao villagers were growing louder. Two young villagers for some reason burst into a fight, wrestling with each other in front of the long table. Yangkai, the village head who sat with some old villagers along the wall, then stood up and went over to stop these two young men. No villager listened. The party secretary had to stop his speech at one stage, begging the audience to be quiet: "Could you leave some topics for home? Or do you intend to talk in my place? If you simply do not want to listen to me, you can tell me. We can ask another person to illustrate the party's policies. Please do not talk loudly now!" He was completely ignored. The work-team member sitting behind the long table showed no motion on his face. Finally, the party secretary finished his speech, and then the village accountant made a short speech about the village budget. Even though Zhao villagers had talked a lot about how the village cadres were corrupt, no one wanted to listen to the explanation about the collective expenditure made in the past few years.

The important task of the meeting was to establish a mass group to square the village accounts. This small group was supposed to be elected from each villager group. The process of election turned out to be very difficult. Although, privately, many villagers criticised the village cadres heavily, no one was happy to be a member of the mass group to square the village account. Nomination thus went in circle. Everyone refused it. The group leader from Dongbang stood up and said crudely to the party secretary: "We don't know anything about accountancy, why don't you just do it yourselves!? You cadres get paid, you should have done this!" Dongbang was one of the poor groups and villagers from this group complained even more than other groups about the corruption of the village cadres regarding expenditure of public money, but it was also they who did not want to join the group to square the budget. In the case of Dawa, Wancheng asked almost everyone and they all refused to join the group. Finally, Wancheng suggested appointing Wanbin, who was absent at the meeting, as the representative of Dawa. Everyone from Dawa agreed. Later, when Wanbin was told this, he said: "No, no way. I will never join them because it is useless".

The mass meeting used to be the most powerful engine of the Maoist revolutionary machine; why did it stop functioning? First of all, there is no longer a notion of 'masses' in Zhaojiahe, where people are divided according to different situations. Zhao villagers see their own village as an anarchy and they often say that Zhaojiahe is a plate of sands *(yi-pan-san-sha)*. Second, the mass organisations, such as the Women's Association, the Poor and Lower-Middle Peasants Association, and so on (as shown in Figure 9), have disappeared. These mass organisations used to function as a necessary mediator between the village cadres and the 'masses'. Without these mass organisations, mass meetings are impossible to organise properly.

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The tension between Lao Fan and Dawa villagers increased in the following weeks. By dining with different families, Lao Fan was able to collect what were called 'mass opinions' *(qun-zhong-yi-jian)* from different households and tried to handle them. Some told Lao Fan that Wanbin was corrupt,[27] since Wanbin's second son, Xincang, had already moved his household registration record out of the village to Dongfeng from which his father was adopted. This is because Xincang already had two daughters; if he wanted a boy, he would have to move somewhere else. His plan was to leave one of his daughters in Zhaojiahe and then he would be allowed to have another try for a son in Dongfeng. Some villagers reported this to Lao Fan and

[27]Zhao villagers used a local dialect word, *ha-le* ('corrupt'), to describe any action that was thought to take advantage of either the village or other people. For instance, to talk about the corruption of the village cadres, Zhao villagers would say that these cadres were all *hale*.

encouraged him to investigate. Lao Fan went to Dongfeng to check the registration record. Lao Fan had not yet been hosted by Wanbin and his wife. One day, when I was having lunch alone, Yin'ai was cursing Lao Fan: "What a *wan-ba-dan* (literally, 'the egg of a turtle')! He (i.e. Lao Fan) dares investigate us. There is so much corruption he does not see. You (change of the pronoun) eat like a pig. You are yourself just a peasant. What an educationalist! You come here to eat free. When you come to my house, I will feed you with shit. I just want to see whether you eat or not. There is only shit for you! Damn you, you want to eat in the evening, three meals a day? No way! Never in my house. You will never have three meals a day at my home! Only two meals of shit for you. You have a salary, you can go to spend on yourself. You shit!"

This kind of cursing continued for about a week. By then I thought that Lao Fan would have a hard time when he came to eat with my host's family. Since I came to the village, my host's family had never prepared a third meal in the evening except for the period of the Chinese New Year, which was about ten days. A few days later, Lao Fan came to eat with my host's family. Two things surprised me. First, the first day when Lao Fan came, contrary to my imagination, Lao Fan was treated with extraordinary politeness and good quality food. It was the first time since the New Year that I saw a plate of fried eggs on an ordinary lunch table, as well as extraordinarily good quality vegetable and tofu dishes. The plate of fried eggs was put in front of Lao Fan. Wanbin, who sat beside Lao Fan, showed an unbelievable hospitality, trying to help Lao Fan with eggs or tofu in a way that I had never seen before. Yin'ai was also very kind to Lao Fan who was really taken as a guest. Second, when Lao Fan was eating with my host family, special soups or noodles were prepared for Lao Fan every night. For five days, when Lao Fan was there, Wanbin and Yin'ai made sure that they came home earlier than usual. When either soup or noodles were ready, Wanbin immediately went to Wangbao's house to invite Lao Fan to have the guest meal.

This not only happened with Wanbin but also with most other villagers in Dawa such as Wanyou, Wancheng, Xicai, Yangkai and so on. Dawa villagers had all been complaining about Lao Fan and cursing, making fun of, looking down upon him, but no one refused to cook Lao Fan special meals in the evening when he turned up. I suggested earlier (see Chapter 4) that food in the village is used as a means of articulating and making social relationships. One of the dimensions that regulates social action in the village is that of the host versus the guest. In order to act upon others efficiently, Zhao villagers often play the role of an impeccable host. Politeness, in this way, constitutes a political action that exerts a kind of control over others. In other words, by way of being polite, which includes a series of dining arrangements, a host exercises his power on the guest. Hospitality as an action can be used for creating and defining a certain kind of social power. This is the reason that Zhao villagers treated Lao Fan as a guest. The good quality food and the evening meal are used to control and subdue the guest.

Meanwhile, the work-team members were also invited by the village cadres for a series of small banquets.

* * *

The most crucial task that the work-team had to carry out was two-fold: to square the village accounts and to reshuffle the village leadership group. A mass group was finally set up to square the village accounts.

Theoretically, the village public spending system should be operated by a trinity of authorities: the village committee is responsible for ratifying expenditure; the accountant is in charge of making records; and a cashier has access to money. The village committee is supposed to consist of at least three persons, the party secretary, the village head, and the vice village head. As Zhao villagers said, in Zhaojiahe, there was no cashier appointed for many years and decisions about spending were never made by the village committee. Xincai, the party secretary, had been playing the role of cashier himself, while, on the other hand, decisions about spending were also made by him. When the mass group started to investigate, what they found was a numerous amount of *bai-tiao-zi* (i.e. receipts with only Xincai's signature). A special case was widely talked about by Zhao villagers. In 1990, in order to purchase some musical instruments for the village school, Xincai, Yangkai (then village head), Rongcai (then vice village head) and Wang (the school master) went on a trip to Xi'an, the capital of the province. They stayed in Xi'an for a couple of days and bought the instruments. When they returned, they did not bring back any receipt from either hotels they stayed in or from the music shop from which they purchased the musical instruments. Instead, they simply wrote down the amount of money they spent during the whole trip, just a total amount, 2400 *yuan*. Zhao villagers did not believe that they could 'manage' to lose their receipts all at once. As Wancai's father talked to me about this, he repeatedly said - "How could they lose all of them, not a single piece of receipt left?" Zhao villagers believed that these cadres did not spent that much, but put the money into their own pockets.

Rumours were often substantiated with evidence that Zhao villagers tended to believe. In the late 1980s, Rongcai built two new *yaos* and several rooms. Zhao villagers commented upon this by saying that it was impossible for Rongcai to build his new place if he did not steal from the village, since he used to be very poor. Rongcai was therefore described as a very poor person who had nothing before he became one of the leaders of the village. Once, when I went to visit the village head with Famin, we saw that there was a new set of tea pottery on Yangkai's table. As soon as we left, Famin said to me that this set of tea pottery belonged to the village but Yangkai stole it.

A more controversial financial scandal concerned a special allocation of five thousand *yuan* made by the local government in the mid 1980s. The money was transferred to the village under the name of the 'Fund for Helping Poor Areas'. It was said that there was no trace at all of how this amount of money was spent. The village cadres, Xincai in particular, insisted that the money was used for bribery in order to install electricity in Zhaojiahe three years ago in 1989. Xincai was in charge of this project and he insisted that the officials in the Xiang (township) government took the money as 'gift'. Apart from the amount of money which was presented as a 'gift' to those who were in charge of the installation of electricity, a large amount of money was said to have been spent on hosting banquets to entertain these officials from the Xiang government, according to Xincai. All this spending left no trace. Zhao villagers agreed with

Xincai that nothing could be done without presenting gifts to people concerned on the one hand but, on the other, they did not believe that what Xincai said was true.

The socialist education work-team was under pressure to go ahead to investigate this particular case. I talked with a team member in March after I moved to live with Zunxi and this work-team member said to me: "Zhaojiahe is so messy that I don't believe it. The village cadres here are very bad. They steal and do everything. But I do not believe that we cannot do anything about it. I swear we will dig something out. I would like to see what they would say if we traced all the people whom the village cadres alleged to have bribed." The work-team sent its members to visit the township and county government, trying to trace all the people who were then concerned with the installation of electricity. The people whom the work-team was able to trace blatantly denied that they had ever taken any bribery. These visits caused troubles. The Leijiawa Xiang government was unhappy about the investigation of its own officials. The Xiang party secretary intervened, asking the team to stop pressuring its officials because, as it was said, this was not good for maintaining the township's stability. Facing the pressure from the Leijiawa Xiang government, the work-team (they came from Jiaodao Xiang) hesitated but did not prepare to give in easily. Then, the Leijiawa Party Branch informed its Jiaodao counterparts which in turn advised the work-team to stop further inquiry into this scandal. Since all members of the work-team came from Jiaodao, they had to listen to their own superiors. The investigation was aborted.

The party secretary, Xincai, was the focus of this investigation, since he was in charge of the whole project. The final task that the work-team was supposed to do was to reshuffle the leadership group of the village. The Leijiawa Xiang government was afraid that the work-team would produce more trouble, so it sent two of its own officials down to the village to help the reshuffle. There were two steps involved in reshuffling. First, an opinion poll was taken among a group of representatives of Zhao villagers. Second, a small scale election meeting was held in the village school. All party members and group leaders as well as some mass representatives, about twenty people in all, joined the election meeting. The Xiang officials appointed the nominees: Yangkai and Rongcai were running for the post of new village head. Yangkai and Rongcai had been the village heads for more than four years and they were the focus of criticism of village corruption. The election was run by vote and the vote was anonymous. Rongcai was elected at this meeting. At the same time, the Leijiawa Xiang officials announced that the Xiang party committee had made the decision to keep Xincai as the party secretary of the village for another four years. Almost no change was made through the reshuffle. Wancheng, Dawa's group leader, stood up after hearing this result and shouted in the face of all the officials and cadres: "If there is another revolution, we will kill all party members first!" No officials seemed to be upset by Wancheng's angry comment, and they pretended that they heard nothing.

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Although there was almost nothing left for the work-team to do after the reshuffle, Lao Fan in Dawa was still in deep trouble. In another group meeting in Dawa, Lao Fan criticised Liuxa, a young wife, and her friends, without mentioning their names, for gossiping too much about other families. Lao Fan said that Liuxa's gossip especially affected the relation between Xinmin's wife and her daughter-in-law. Lao Fan obtained his information from Xinmin's wife

who was herself thought of as a notorious gossip monger among Dawa villagers. Liuxa did not join the meeting but was told later by Wenfang, one of Liuxa's close allies. Liuxa became extremely angry after hearing this. The following morning, a fight between Liuxa and Xinmin's wife burst out. Soon, the daughter-in-law of Xinmin's wife and Wenfang joined them. When I heard their voices and ran out to look, four women were twisted together, trying to tear each other's clothes. They did not stop fighting until their husbands came to separate them. As a commentator, Wanyou told me that Lao Fan, hiding in his room shivering, was too scared to come out to face the fight although Liuxa and Wenfang shouted very loudly, "Come out Lao Fan, you bastard, we want to ask you about what you have said!" After this fight, Liuxa and Wenfang, encouraged by their husbands, threatened to lock up Lao Fan's bicycle and to make a private interrogation to find out what Lao Fan heard from Xinmin's wife. By then I had already left Dawa for Nanjian but I was told by both Wanyou and Wangbao (Lao Fan was staying in his house) that Lao Fan was hiding in his room and was afraid of going out. As Wanyou said: "Once I saw that, when Lao Fan prepared to go somewhere, he came out of Wangbao's door but found that Wenfang's husband sat in front of his own door, so Lao Fan returned to his own room and dared not pass in front of Wenfang's husband. Lao Fan waited for long but Wenfang's husband was still there, so Lao Fan had to climb the hills to choose another road, which is much further than the normal one".

There was another reason for Lao Fan to hide in his room. At the second mass meeting in Dawa, Lao Fan supported the idea of rebuilding the village road. In order to widen the road, some trees had to be cut down and removed. Few families actually cut down their own trees but everyone in Dawa threatened to confiscate Lao Fan's bicycle because the road was left unchanged and many claimed that they had cut down their own trees. The Dawa villagers were not be able to see Lao Fan in April, though the work-team was supposed to finish their work in July. As a matter of fact, the socialist education work-team left the village one and half months earlier than they had planned. The summer harvest was coming. Zhao villagers soon forgot the work-team. If asked, they would always reply by saying: "It was just a waste. It helped nothing. It just wasted money and time."

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The fate of the work-team in Zhaojiahe suggests not only a re-ordering of political relations between the village cadres and ordinary villagers but also, more important for us to recognise, a re-organisation of power relations in general, which makes simple 'victories' of any kind or for any group more difficult to achieve, because there are more ways both to exert and to resist political control and dominance. In a way, we can say that politics in rural Shaanxi becomes a game in which there is only play but no obvious winner or loser. No one took away Wanbin's extra land, nor was there any significant change in the village leadership group.

Discussion

My discussion of the changing strategies of political practices in Zhaojiahe does not follow the main line of recent inquiry, which often focuses on the conflicting interest groups

within local communities who compete for the control over economic resources.[28] What I try to examine in this chapter is not the relationship between the cadres and villagers, but the changing strategies of political practices that underlie the relationship between the cadres and villagers. I do not ask the question of which group, the cadres or villagers, have more annual incomes, I do not try to put Zhao villagers into different income groups - which is too popular a mode of analysis in recent years (see for instance Lu 1992); instead, I have examined the way in which Zhao villagers articulate their problems and complaints regarding the social and economic transformation of rural China, and the way in which the cadres, local officials and villagers are situated in complex, dialogical relations.

My central concern in this chapter is to try to follow the logic of practice of Zhao villagers and avoid locating myself at a vantage point overlooking the structure of village politics. I have tried to describe the changing strategies of economic-politics from the angle of ordinary villagers, and to look at how Zhao villagers actually act in relation to the cadres and local officials. In the previous chapters, I have argued that everyday practices are concerned with socially recognised ways of differentiating people and Zhao villagers learn to be 'emotional' through social practice. This chapter has shown how Zhao villagers employ everyday strategies in the exercise of political control and dominance. I argue that political organisations and economic institutions not only produce but also are produced by everyday practices.

My argument is that both the village cadres and ordinary villagers are adopting a similar kind of flexible strategy in coping with the changing society, of which the most significant character - as it is understood by Zhao villagers - is that economic competence and advantage have to come from certain social and political power. In a way, for Zhao villagers, economic competition is a political struggle to obtain and maintain human relationships as sources of social power. In so doing, the conventional division of the fields of social relations in the village, which used to be organised around a descent model, have to be modified. Spatial images and representations become a dominant mode of social classification and a major frame of reference for social action. The better-off brothers are not thought of as more capable than others in their ability of production but, rather, in their capability of maintaining more 'useful', powerful, privileged connections of human relations. Economic differentiation is seen as being arranged according to a matrix of geographical regions. Questions about economic development and accumulation of wealth become questions of geopolitics. The outside forces (outside the household, outside the villager group, outside the village, outside the township, and so on) are therefore seen as the ultimate source for economic and social change.

It is evident that there is a general transformation in rural China. However, in the case of Zhaojiahe, what is going to be the final result of this change - if there is anything final - is not clear yet. In order to understand this transformation, I argue that, instead of focusing on the political economy of rural China, we should pay more attention to the way in which the

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[28]For instance, Nee argues for a theory of market transition - because the cadres have less direct control over economic resources, 'power becomes more diffused in the economy and society' (1991: 267, see also his 1989). On the other hand, Oi argues that, by taking advantage of the economic reforms, the village cadres still own power in the re-ordering of the society. As she wrote, 'a free market environment does not necessarily lead to the end of bureaucratic control and demise of cadre power' (1989b: 233).

hierarchies of a smaller order are produced and reproduced at everyday level. For instance, how do Zhao villagers entertain the local officials with nice food in order to exert control on them? How have the spatial-temporal practices of everyday life changed and what is the significance of this change? I also call for more attention to the way in which Zhao villagers explain and interpret their own actions and social change.

Of course, institutional change plays a part in undermining the Maoist style of political practice. As we have seen, the mass organisations, such as the Women's Association and the Poor and Lower-Middle Peasants Association, either disappeared or have stopped functioning in Zhaojiahe. Political control can no longer exercised through these organisations. However, this change does not indicate a less state-controlled society; rather, it simply indicates that the form of control has started to change. Shue argues (1988) that the disappearance of the Maoist style of political institutions and practices (the mass campaigns and work-teams, for instance) should not lead to a conclusion that the power of the state is diminishing or disappearing; instead, a new form of political control, which is as powerful as, if not more than, the Maoist style of politics emerged under the governance of the Deng coalition. I argue that, in order to understand the changing strategies of political practices, we need to look more closely at how both ordinary villagers and cadres and local officials act upon each other. The characteristics of a general transformation taking place in rural China can only be understood better by a close inspection of the changing strategies of everyday practices carried out by not only the cadres and officials but also, more importantly, ordinary villagers, who are often self-proclaimed victims.

Conclusion

My general aim is to displace any transcendent regime of authenticity, to argue that all authoritative collections, whether made in the name of art or science, are historically contingent and subject to local reappropriation.

James Clifford

In the summer of 1992, when Zhao villagers were preparing themselves for another harvest and the wheat fields had already become golden, I decided to leave the village. The neighbours of my hosts and some other villagers came to see me before I left. At that time, I was staying in a room in an empty *yuanzi* (courtyard) in Nanjian, which used to be occupied by one of Famin's *zijiawu* brothers who had moved away from the village and settled in the county town. Everyone came with some kind of gift, most commonly boiled eggs. We drank tea and talked about the forthcoming harvest. After everyone left and I had gone to bed, my host in Dawa, Wanbin, came to visit me. He told me that, earlier, he had come twice but did not come inside because he heard other people's voices. Wanbin, too, brought several boiled eggs for me. He put the eggs on the table, drank some tea and started to talk about how hard he had tried to help me with my fieldwork when I was staying with his family. Two days before I had gone to Dawa to visit Wanbin's family to thank them and paid for my accommodation. When we were talking, I thanked him again for his help, but Wanbin continued to talk about what he and his family tried to do for me. "We have done everything we can to help you. When you wanted to join a funeral, I went there with you. When you needed to meet the village accountant, I introduced him to you. We have done everything we can for you", Wanbin insisted. It was already very late, about one or two o'clock in the morning, but Wanbin did not seem to prepare to leave. I was exhausted but gradually understood his message: he was unhappy about my moving to live with Zunxi and Famin. To Wanbin, I was his guest. A guest as a social category is inseparable from his host. Whatever I do concerns Wanbin's reputation and social status. This is why Wanbin has to come to talk to me alone in the night. When I left Dawa and moved to stay in the main village, what I was concerned with was to know more people and to visit more households, but Wanbin thought that I was unsatisfied with his house and family. Wanbin started to mention many other things that I had not realised earlier. For instance, he mentioned that I did not help him with the agricultural work any more in the last few days that I was in Dawa.

This is an interesting conversation that makes me realise how people are closely connected in the village. In Zhaojiahe, one always acts in anticipation of how other people (such as hosts, *zijiawu* brothers, relatives and neighbours) will think about what one does. I did not even notice that Zunxi had slipped into my room and Wanbin suddenly stopped talking. Wanbin and Zunxi started to talk about other things, completely irrelevant to what Wanbin and I were talking about earlier. I went outside to breathe some fresh air. After a long

conversation, Wanbin came out of the room and, in front of Zunxi, held my hands and said to me warmly that he and his family enjoyed having me in their house and welcomed me to visit them again. After Wanbin left, Zunxi told me that Wanbin was angry about my moving out of his house because he thought my decision damaged his reputation as a host. According to Zunxi, Wanbin thought that I did not know the rules of human relationships. In particular, Wanbin and his family were unhappy about the fact that I did not go to join their daughter's wedding in the county town (I went to another wedding on that day). In the end, Zunxi said to me, "Don't worry. You will leave tomorrow. Who cares? Nobody knows what you have done here."

The following morning, Famin accompanied me to go to the train station. We sat on his donkey cart, slowly moving towards Qifeng. It was a beautiful day: the golden wheat fields looked picturesque and the village gradually disappeared from our perspectives. While I was enjoying the view, Famin suddenly said to me, "Wanbin is a very difficult person to be with. All the people in Dawa are difficult in some way. Unlike us in Nanjian, they are very good at playing tricks with people. We are ordinary peasants and we do not know much about how to guess other people's ideas." I did not know whether Famin had already talked to somebody else that morning. It seemed he knew everything that happened last night. There could be no secrets among Zhao villagers. Later on, Famin even asked me how much I had paid Wanbin, and I felt it extremely difficult to answer his question.

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Unlike scientists, an ethnographer cannot 'freeze' the social contexts as the 'fixed' conditions for his or her observation. In my case, as an 'insider's outsider' (Rabinow 1977), I often have to choose - consciously or unconsciously - a side when I 'observe' or listen to Zhao villagers. My point is that this involvement is a constituent part of my fieldwork and very important for a critical understanding of both social life in the village and the general socio-economic conditions of the early 1990s in rural China. In this thesis, I have dealt with three interrelated but different themes. The first one is concerned with a theoretical stance. I have argued that, beside the problem of what to write, there is a more urgent need to reflect upon the question of how to write. I have tried not only to describe what is happening in the village, but also to reflect on how my description is undertaken. In a way, this thesis is organised like a narration from the point of view of the ethnographer. The chapters are arranged according to the ethnographer's understanding of the connections of the actions and events taking place in the village. The third theme, the most important one, is to provide a detailed ethnographic account of a post-reform village. There are important implications derived from my description for an understanding of rural China in transformation.

Theory as practice

My starting position, which is closely linked with the recent development in anthropological discussions of the nature and significance of ethnographic writing, is that, either consciously or not, an ethnographer writes from a certain angle which is determined by his or her own subjectivity and positioning. I see my own writing as situated in a set of chains of

writings on China by three different subjects - the native anthropologists, western anthropologists (and sinologists) and, more recently, the overseas (diaspora) Chinese anthropologists. In particular, I have drawn my attention to the problems that the early native anthropologists overlooked or ignored.

I argue that, in the tradition represented by the early native anthropologists who often claim a nativist authenticity,[1] there is a missing dimension in critical self-reflection. Following the argument recently developed in anthropology (e.g. Geertz 1988; Clifford 1986, 1988a, 1988b, 1988c; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Rabinow 1986; Fardon 1990; Marcus and Fischer 1986), I maintain that fieldwork and writing should aim at a critical understanding of both the position (and the context) from which an ethnographer writes and the subjects that he or she studies. Therefore, we need to challenge not only the possible prejudice and partiality of truth (Clifford 1986), which is often proclaimed under the name of science or objectivity by the western anthropologists (or sinologists), but also to reflect critically on the premises of the native anthropologists whose position often leads to an oversimplified version of nativist authenticity. Both positions are equally dangerous.

In order to achieve a critical understanding in both directions, one must examine carefully the discourses and categories made and employed by the people whom one studies. In this thesis, I have tried to look closely at how Zhao villagers talk about and comment upon their own action and practice. On matters such as the evaluation of the Maoist past, Zhao villagers present a different view from the official discourse which privileges the present. Zhao villagers are no less than others active as commentators on social and economic changes, though they may not acknowledge their power of producing such criticism. In other words, on formal occasions, Zhao villagers often turn to a strategy that portrays themselves as victims of social and political change. In my view, it is dangerous - in the case of rural China in particular - to overlook the significance of how Chinese peasants interpret and explain their own organisations and activities. I am arguing against the tendency of employing either official or theoretical (elite) categories in ethnographic description of Chinese peasants. Both the official and elite categories deny Chinese villagers the ability to reflect on their own history and action.

Partly, the difficulty lies in the fact that the villagers often do not supply consistent interpretation or explanation for their own action because much social action is 'unarticulable' (Taylor 1993). This is the reason that we need to take an 'practice approach', which allows us to locate - in my case - Zhao villagers as both active practitioners and commentators in the articulation of a changing society (cf. Ortner 1984).

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A theoretical consideration is linked with the recent debate about the notion 'local people' and the associated thesis of history making.[2] The tendency of so-called globalisation

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[1]For a brief review of monograph writing on China, see the Introduction, Section 2. For an overview of anthropological and sociological investigations of Chinese culture and society with a focus on American scholarship, see Gold 1993; also Shambaugh 1993.

[2]Asad traces the debate and comments, "Among anthropologists, 'history' is a notion that few would now dare to despise. On the contrary, all of us solemnly acknowledge it. But what kind of history? More often than not, it is history in the active voice: everywhere, local people are 'making their own history,' 'contesting'

seems to force the idea of 'local people' out of disciplines such as anthropology. Sahlins criticises Eric Wolf's notion of global expansion of Western capitalism[3] and argues against the view that the global expansion of Western capitalism has made local people the passive objects of their own history and not its authors.[4] Sahlins calls for a more sophisticated understanding of the Marxist theory of production as a cultural process. As he insisted: "Western capitalism has loosed on the world enormous forces of production, coercion and destruction. Yet precisely because they cannot be resisted, the relations and goods of larger system also take on meaningful places in local schemes of things" (Sahlins 1988: 4; quoted in Asad 1993: 4).[5] But if so, Asad argues that 'local people' are not the authors of their own history because 'their authorship consists merely in adjusting consciously to those forces and giving that adjustment a meaning' (1993: 4). Therefore, even if local people are said to be the authors of their own history, they are at best the secondary ones, because they are part of the world system in which the capitalist machine works as an organising principle.[6]

An underlying problem is concerned with the articulation of three theoretical concepts - consciousness, agents, and subjects - which bears direct influence, in one way or another, on the current debates in the social sciences. For instance, the Subaltern Studies group of historians brought up a crucial question. They were dissatisfied with the 'elite historiography' of India, which denied subordinate (in a sense, 'local') people a consciousness of their own and hence the capacity to make their own history (cf. Asad 1993: 13-19). However, is it necessary for people to

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it, 'borrowing' meanings from western dominators, and 'reconstructing' their own cultural existence. This notion of history emphasizes not only the unceasing work of human creators but also the unstable and hybrid character of their creation. In some versions, therefore, the determining character of 'world system' and 'dependent structure' is rejected; in others, what is repudiated are claims about 'authenticity', 'a different people', 'a unitary culture,' 'tradition,' and so on. Intelligent and influential people writing today are committed to this view of history making" (1993: 2).

[3]For reference to Wolf's argument, see his 1982; see also Asad, 1987, 'Are there histories of people without Europe?'

[4]An elaborate argument can be found in Sahlins's Radcliffe-Brown lecture, delivered in 1988 (cf. Asad 1993: 4), which is based on his earlier thesis presented in 'Islands of History'. "World system theory itself allows for the preservation of satellite cultures, as the means of reproduction of capital in the dominant European order. But if so, from the alternate vantage of the so-called dominated people, European wealth is harnessed to the reproduction and even the creative transformation of their own cultural order" (Sahlins 1985: viii).

[5]In a widely reviewed essay (1984), Ortner also argues for the thesis of 'local people making their own history'. As she writes, "The problems derived from the capitalism-centred worldview also affect the political economists' view of history. History is often treated as something that arrives, like a ship, from outside the society in question. Thus we do not get the history *of* that society, but the impact of (our) history *on* that society" (1984: 143, emphasis in the original). In relation to the function of anthropological investigation and its possible contribution to the human sciences in general, Ortner argues: "Whether it be the hidden hand of structure or the juggernaut of capitalism that is seen as the agent of society/history, it is certainly not in any central way real people doing real things" (1984: 144). What underlies Ortner's argument is her concern about the role of anthropology as a discipline of the social sciences. A misleading notion of history, according to Ortner, will endanger the discipline itself. As she put it, "The attempt to view other systems from ground level is the basis, perhaps the only basis, of anthropology's distinctive contribution to the human sciences.... Further, it is our location 'on the ground' that puts us in a position to see people not simply as passive reactors to and enactors of some 'system', but as active agents and subjects in their own history" (1984: 143). It is not, of course, always only people as individuals who are the agents but as part of the complex forms of association as well.

[6]Asad's points out that Ortner's argument is based on 'an old empiricist prejudice to suppose that things are real only when confirmed by sensory data (Asad 1993: 6). Who are those 'real people doing real things'? Defined by whom? And how? "However, if anthropology's distinctive contribution requires it to take a *ground level* view of things, it is difficult to see how confining oneself to that level is sufficient to determine in what degree and in what way other levels become relevant" (Asad 1993: 6, emphasis in the original). Therefore, Asad argues, 'knowledge *about* local peoples is not itself local knowledge', nor 'is it therefore simply universal in the sense of being accessible to everyone' (9), because, though people are all locatable from a 'ground level' view, they are not equally so by each other. What defines who belong to what kind of 'local people' - argues Asad - is determined by a set of power relations which are inevitably linked to the rise and expansion of Western capitalism. The crucial difference between those who are termed as 'local people' and those who are not is that of power: the organisation of spaces by the capitalist machinery and modernising nation-states.

have their own 'consciousness' in order to make their own history? Asad argues that 'consciousness' is the essence of the principle of self-constitution, which is often taken as a fundamental assumption in the argument of claiming the capacity of 'local people' making their own history, but, as Asad points out, an agent's act is more (or less) than his or her consciousness of it. As Asad writes, "My argument, in brief, is that contrary to the discourse of many radical historians and anthropologists, *agent* and *subject* (where the former is the principle of effectivity and the latter of consciousness) do not belong to the same theoretical universe and should not, therefore, be coupled" (1993: 16, emphasis in the original). In other words, agents may not be conscious of the role they play in making history, and hence it is not necessary to claim a self-constituting subject with a consciousness of his own to defend the thesis of history-making based on the idea of 'local (or subordinate) people'. Therefore, to include the 'excluded histories' means, according to Asad, to examine how ideas or institutions are borrowed, translated, comprehended by different groups of people over different locations in a historical transformation (to notice that 'location' is already part of a historical construction).

Asad is right to point out that an agent's action (effectivity) is more (or less) than his 'consciousness'. However, what I have tried to do in this thesis is not to claim that Zhao villagers are making their own history, but to examine how their actions and practices constitute and are constituted by the conditions of the social transformation taking place in rural China. The notion of 'local people' is not used in the sense that they are 'creators' or 'authors' of their own history, but in the sense that they are part of a historical transition in which some groups of people are marginalised by the official discourse.

Since the late 1970s, mainland China has been undergoing a dramatic social and economic transition, which, as a productive force, redefines the relationship both between the central *(zhong-yang)* and the provincial (local) and between different regions within China. Power relations have been re-organised at different levels of the society. This re-organisation is centred around economic development and the process of modernisation which produce both knowledge and ignorance (Hobart 1993). The notion 'backwardness', with all its moral and political contents, becomes a necessary invention to be used to label the areas that are less economically developed or favoured. Alongside the re-organisation of power relations, there has been an enormous use of statistical classifications, which are used to differentiate and categorise people into different groups according to their annual incomes, to re-locate different groups of people into imagined communities, and to re-define geographic divisions in terms of economic power. Just as Asad has argued that people are not equally located and knowledge about local people is not simply 'local knowledge', I see a study of a group of people, who are marginalised by the social and economic change, as a possible - small but necessary - means to understand more fully the social change in rural China. It is precisely because people in rural China are differentiated, and some are allowed more voices and others less, it is necessary to examine carefully groups of people whose voices are seldom heard and whose practices are often left with simply a total description - 'backwardness'. It is precisely because no group could claim that they are outside such historical change that it is necessary to observe in detail how

those who are marginalised talk about and comment on their own practices in order to reveal the changing strategies of practices in contemporary rural China.

Writing as a narration

I do not claim that this thesis is an objective description from a vantage point; rather, it is a narration of social life in the village by the ethnographer participating in it. I see my own experience (such as the encounters with my hosts) as a constituent part of the fieldwork, which should not be excluded from my description. Events and actions can be understood only in the light of my comprehension of the situation in which these events and action took place. Therefore, it is crucial to describe not only what happened but also what was understood by the ethnographer at that moment. This is why I have used in many cases my own experiences as examples of discussion.

Writing about how the Sora villagers of eastern India communicate with the dead, Vitebsky tries to engage in dialogues with the subjects of his study. He does not view his own experience (that of the ethnographer) as being irrelevant to his description of the dialogues with the dead among the Sora villagers. As he writes,

> This analysis of the emotional tone of dialogues will depend not simply on what was said at the time, but on *my understanding* of the connections between words and other gestures, actions and events, as well as of the place of these words in the sequences of episodes which make up the relationships of the persons concerned over many years. This is the understanding which Carrithers calls narrativity, the understanding of 'complex nets of ever-new deeds and changing attitudes' by which humans 'perceive any given action not only as response to the immediate circumstances or current imputed mental state of an interlocutor or of oneself but also as part of an unfolding story'[7] (Vitebsky 1993: 8 emphasis added).

It is important to notice that my descriptions of the events and activities of Zhao villagers are organised according to my comprehension of the relationships between people concerned at the time. The chapters of this thesis are arranged according to my fieldwork experience. In Chapter 1, the ethnographer enters the village and introduces the village by way of looking at how it is talked about and represented, particularly by Zhao villagers themselves. Zhao villagers are very critical of the present status of the society and they praise the Maoist past. This raises the question of how the past is made according to the present frame of reference. The way in which the past and present are evaluated leads me to an examination of the fields of social relations. In Chapter 2, and 3, I focus on the conventional organisation of kinship and examine its changes through marriage. In Chapter 4, the ethnographer provides an interpretation of the process of signification of social relations by looking at food presentation and representation. In the second half of the thesis (Chapter 5, 6 and 7), the angle of discussion changes. The focus here is on the way in which Zhao villagers produce and are produced by the practices that they carry out on various social occasions - daily, ceremonial and

[7]His citing Carrithers 1990 - 'Is anthropology art or science?' *Current Anthropology* 31(3): 269.

economic-political. My concern in these chapters is to show how Zhao villagers (as 'subjects' or 'persons') are made and transformed by their own actions and practices.

Some implications

The central aim of this thesis is to provide a detailed ethnographic account of social life in a post-reform Chinese village. Although the thesis focuses on Zhaojiahe, a north-western Chinese village, located in a less economically developed area, there are some implications which bear more general significance for an understanding of the changing conditions of rural China.

Zhaojiahe is a single surname village and the Maoist revolution hardly altered the form of its conventional kinship organisations - the principles of patrilineal descent and virilocal marriage. This situation has only started to change in recent years. In order to broaden social space, intra-village marriage became an acceptable practice in the past decade. Zhao villagers explain this change by referring to the necessity of economic co-operation between different households. The implication is that, although Zhao villagers stress the importance of making social and political connections outside the village, social space within the village - partly as a result of the differentiating practices - has been broadened and enlarged. Hence, marriage practices become more divergent than before, which runs counter to the prediction that the economic reforms would bring back a set of traditional marriage practices including prohibition of or abhorrence towards village endogamy (see for instance Harrell 1992; Devis and Harrell 1993). Affinal connections used to be the dominant means of establishing social relations outside the village. Economic differentiation and stratification in the past decade produced a larger social space within the village. The perception of both geographic and social space has started to change.

In relation to the changing strategy in mate choice, a general characteristic of daily life in the village is that spatial images are made and used as a primary source of social power and, therefore, as a basic co-ordinate for social action. This reflects the shift in the official discourse: people in rural China are no longer viewed in terms of good or bad class origins but in terms of regions or locations and the associated socio-economic images. Where one comes from, the place in which one stays or belongs to, and so on, becomes a central question that dominates the daily conversations and underlies everyday social and economic practices. I suggest that there is a general change in the way in which social power is generated. It is space (its representations and images)[8] rather than time that emerges as a major source of social power. Representations of spatial images become a means of articulating social and economic differences. Production of space is a production of power relations. In my view, this indicates one of the historical conditions of the dramatic social change taking place in rural China.

As a consequence, for instance, in the case of Zhaojiahe, there emerged a set of new categories of social relationships, such as neighbourhood, friendship, colleagueship and so on,

[8]For an interesting introduction to the problem of space and time with reference to the passage from modernity to postmodernity, see Harvey 1990.

which no longer derive their social power from kinship or marriage. These categories have been gaining greater social significance in respect to seeking economic co-operation and making political alliances. The production of spatial images - representation of social relationships in terms of places and locations - is based upon an underlying assumption about the linkage between space and wealth, which, contrary to the Maoist revolutionary claim that development could only be achieved through hard-working and self-reliance, presents outside forces as the genesis of economic development and accumulation of wealth. In other words, space as a source of social power and its exercise has designated the outside forces as an ultimate source for social change.

* * *

Zhao villagers see social relations as alterable, adaptable, modifiable and changing enterprises. They do not see social relations as static, unchangeable networks, either defined by kinship or economic-political relations; rather, they see them as modifiable and changing processes which need to be constantly worked and reworked through the means of various kinds of social and cultural 'norms'. In Zhaojiahe, presentation and representation of food are used as a major means of articulating social relations. Social relations are taken as social actions in which each of Zhao villagers not only acts on but also is acted upon by others.

My material suggests that it is often misleading to view the fields of social relations in rural China in terms of 'lineages' or 'networks', because this view tends to neglect the changing character of these relations. I have tried in this thesis to draw attention to the strategies and tactics of production of social relations. I argue that a 'practice approach', which focuses on not only social action but also its agents and instruments, helps us capture the changing character of social relationships in rural China.

* * *

The core characteristic of everyday practices in Zhaojiahe is 'situationality'. I use the term 'situationality' to refer to a set of strategies and tactics concerning socially recognised ways of differentiating people according to different occasions. Zhao villagers are fully aware of the situation in which their actions are carried out and directed towards a particular person or a group of persons. Zhao villagers are explicit in insisting that one has to change one's attitude or behaviour according to whom one is dealing with. This awareness of the situation in which one acts is not always fully articulable since a common understanding of the situation is often assumed - to use Taylor's terms - by 'shared' or 'dialogic agents'.[9] This awareness is

[9]In an effort to interpret Bourdieu's notion of 'habitus' and its relevance to the social sciences, Taylor traces a philosophical tradition that runs from Wittgenstein's 'philosophical investigation' to today. As Taylor argues, Wittgenstein's philosophy threatens the monological subject or consciousness presupposed and assumed in the earlier tradition of western philosophy and tries to situate our understanding in practice. This means that there are elements implicit in our activities which go beyond what we manage to frame representations of. As Taylor interprets this: "Our understanding itself is embodied" (1993: 50). This sense of embodiment, argues Taylor, proposes a notion of 'dialogical agent' in human action. "An action is dialogical, in the sense that I'm using the word here, when it is effected by an integrated, nonindividual agent. This means that for those involved in it, its identity as this kind of action essentially depends on the agency being shared. These actions are constituted as such by a shared understanding among those who make up the common agent" (1993: 52). As Taylor argues, this sense of embodiment includes a 'combination of features it exhibits: that it is a form of *understanding*, a making sense of things and actions, but at the same time is entirely unarticulated, and thirdly, can be the basis of fresh articulation. ... intellectualism leaves us with the choice only of an understanding which consists of representations or of no understanding at all. Embodied understanding provides us with the third alternative we need to make sense of ourselves' (1993: 53, emphasis in the original). It is not unproblematic for Taylor to use these terms, such as 'embodiment', 'understanding',

gained through the differentiating practices prevailing in the everyday life of the village. Zhao villagers differentiate and divide both within themselves and from others by making reference to a set of - often unarticulable - social or cultural 'norms' (cf. Foucault 1982; Rabinow 1991). For instance, as a guest, one should be very careful about how much and the way in which one eats. Different people should be treated with different kinds of cigarettes. However, the point is that there is no formal principle that guides or regulates a guest's or a host's behaviour and this social acceptance must be obtained by practice through differentiating 'us' from 'others' according to various social occasions. It is the shifting and changing situations that determine how one should behaviour or act; in so doing, the Zhao villager is made a specific kind of 'subject' or 'person'. My argument is that there is a mutual conditioning between what Chinese peasants are and what they do, and an understanding of this process requires us to examine carefully what I call 'situational practices' prevalent in rural China.

In an effort to describe the transnational formation of the overseas Chinese identity, Aihwa Ong (1993) speaks about the flexible strategies employed by the diaspora Chinese in seeking various kinds of opportunities concerning business activities, family life, and citizenship on the edge between different 'empires' - China, Britain and United States. She speaks of the identities of the diaspora Chinese as social and historical constructs, discursively represented according to different frames of reference. The strategies of everyday practices among the diaspora Chinese are flexible in nature. Geopolitical questions can be - for many of them - re-formulated by way of a cultural discourse. Citizenship, business opportunities and family life are all articulated by possible mobility both in the geographic and the cultural sense. Although diaspora Chinese businessmen and Zhao villagers face entirely different social and economic environments, they share certain assumptions in viewing themselves as being unable to change the wider economic-political relations. Given the cultural heritage of China and its long history of the direct exercise of state power over all levels of social life (see for instance Yang 1994), I suggest that the inclination towards 'flexible strategies' by way of engaging in situational practices among Chinese people indicates a kind of historically situated social practice.

Earlier, Fei argued that, in contrast to that of western societies, in China there was a 'differential mode of association' - people are organised by overlapping networks which are in turn composed of differentiated categories of social relationships (1992: 60-70).[10] These networks are discontinuous; that is, people are not organised in a single systematic way. Each link in these networks is defined in terms of *'guanxi'*, the Chinese word for 'relationship',[11] which is both normatively defined and strictly personal. Networks of social relationships have no explicit boundaries. 'The moral content of behaviour in a network is situation specific' (cf. Hamilton and Wang 1992: 18-24). Fei is right to point out that the way in which people are

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intellectualism', 'agents' and the like, in such an unspecified manner. However, I agree with his point that social actions are not always explicitly articulable.

[10]Fei's work was originally published in 1947 in Chinese and recently recollected in Fei Xiaotong Xuanji ('Selected Works by Fei Xiaotong'), 1988, Tianjin.

[11]Recently, M. M. Yang argues that gifts, favours and banquets - the art of social relationships in contemporary China - is a strategy that counter-balances the 'fearful' state intervention of 'civil society', and the economic reforms, or the project of modernity of the state as Yang calls it, allow people to engage in more 'artistic' creation of human relations, which embraces a growing maturity of 'civil society' (1994).

related in rural China is different from that in the west, but, by way of focusing upon *organisations* and *networks* of social relationships, Fei has overlooked the way in which these organisations and networks are made and used. My materials suggest that social relationships as changing enterprises are produced and reproduced in practice according to particular situations and directed towards particular groups of people as particular strategies.

* * *

It is in this way that the emotions or 'personal' feelings (which are already a social construct) of Zhao villagers can be understood. As I have shown in Chapter 6, one can hardly speak about emotions or 'personal' feelings as if they bear any essential cultural meanings, because, to Zhao villagers, emotions are expressed in regard to specific circumstances. One can hardly talk about emotions as abstract attributes (such as happiness or anger) of individuals without considering the effects that these emotions cast on others and the contexts in which they are expressed. Some scholars have argued that Chinese peasants are 'sociocentric' because they deny the view that personal feelings or emotions have direct symbolic bearings on social relationships or institutions (Potter and Potter 1990). I argue that this sense of 'sociocentricism' is first of all about differentiating people according to different circumstances in order for Zhao villagers to act or behave differently.

In the case of Zhaojiahe, I found no direct linkage between a certain kind of expression of emotion and an intrinsic cultural definition of it. For instance, notions such as 'happiness' are not 'inner experiences' of individuals but often improvised social actions, which tend to invoke 'violent' body contact. My point is that, in order to understand how the emotional world of Zhao villagers is socially constructed, it is important to look carefully at the way in which emotions are expressed or used. In particular, I argue that Zhao villagers as individuals are able to perform on certain social occasions such as weddings and funerals without rendering their actual 'personal' emotions or feelings. For instance, Zhao women wail at funerals according to the order given by others. In my view, it is misleading to focus on whether the women who wail 'feel' grief or sadness about the loss of their family members. What is important is to find out how wailing produces certain effects and consequences on other people on these occasions. It is the effectivity of emotions that Zhao villagers are concerned about.

* * *

The village politics in Zhaojiahe also needs to be understood as and in practice. The village studies, which focus on the Maoist era, often stress the struggles for political power between different groups of people. Competition between different groups of people in carrying out revolutionary schemes was often intense (see for instance Chan et al. 1984). Regarding the effects of the economic reforms, some scholars have paid attention to the changing power relations between the village cadres and ordinary villagers and examined the change in terms of their different capabilities in allocating economic resources. Some have argued that the changes in the way economic resources are allocated and distributed have influenced the way in which a new set of power relations is established (see for instance Nee 1991); while other scholars see this change as being simply a redistribution of the previous set of power relations derived from the Maoist past (see for instance Oi 1991). In this manner of discussion, two

categories - the village cadres and ordinary villagers - are often sharply distinguished. In my view, this approach cannot help us to understand the practices that underlie the relationship between these two groups. My argument is that, in terms of strategies of practices, there are more similarities than differences between these two social groups. The difference, again, lies in the situation in which either group exerts more or less power on the other.

In dealing with the changing relationship between the state and society, Vivienne Shue made an illuminating comment:

> What we may find ourselves witnessing over the next few decades, therefore, under the rubric of liberalization and reform of the excessively dictatorial state-socialist bureaucracy, may not in fact be the retreat of the state from stringent rule over the peasantry, but the rerooting of a relegitimized and reinvigorated state power in new social groups, and the reorganization, restaffing, and reconsolidation of the state apparatus itself in new, more effective forms (1988: 152).

These new, more effective forms of control may not appear to be in the form of direct conflicts between the different interest groups. Instead, they may be less 'stringent' in appearance but more effective through seemingly 'neutral' means of political control and dominance.

* * *

"The peasant experience of reform is rooted in the peasant experience of revolution", argues Croll. By the approach of looking at how the past, the present and the future were portrayed, represented, and manipulated, Croll argues that the heaven enlightened by the communist revolution, the dream prescribed by the collectivist operation of people's communes, the future of promised happiness, have fallen apart and Chinese peasants have turned their heads and hearts to the present which is full of uncertainty (1994). It is under this general social condition that Zhao villagers developed a nostalgia towards the Maoist past. To Zhao villagers, nothing appears to be more pleasant than the period of people's communes. This nostalgia, derived from a comparison of their own economic conditions with others in the present, presents a social critique of the economic reforms and an articulation of dissatisfaction towards the emergence of new social and economic stratification and differentiation.

Sartre once made a comment on the revolutionary consciousness, pointing out that the present becomes unbearable only because a delightful future has been available to imagine:

> It is necessary to reverse the common opinion and acknowledge that it is not the harshness of a situation or the sufferings it imposes that lead people to conceive of another state of affairs in which things would be better for everybody. It is on the day that we are able to conceive of another state of affairs, that a new light is cast on our trouble and our suffering and we decide that they are unbearable (1957: 434-435)

The collectivist rhetoric of the future may be disappearing but not the Maoist past. The nostalgia of the recent past gains a specific significance in representing both the present and the future. Zhao villagers claimed that 'the present society is rancid', because peasants are ignored

and cheated by others. No matter whether we agree with this assertion or not, Sartre's comment is suggestive - 'a new light' has been cast on our troubling present.

Appendix 1 Key Glossaries in the Main Text

baicaixin	白菜心
bangmangde	帮忙的
baoshouxing	保守性
bei	伯
bu weisheng	不卫生
buxing	不行
cai	菜
caili	彩礼
daisha	呆傻
danzhang	担杖
Dawa	大洼
Dayuhe	大浴河
dazao	大早
dianjiao	奠轿
dinghun	订婚
Dongzhi	冬至
Duanwu	端五
dui	队
duilian	对联
er-dan	二蛋
fan	饭
fanxiao	返销
fei	费
fenbixing	封闭性
fukuafeng	浮夸风
ganma	干妈
ganmo	干馍
ganp(b)u	干部
ge	哥
ge-gu-ge	个顾个
gongneng moshi	功能模式
gu	箍
guanxi	关系
Guanzhong	关中
Guomindang	国民党
guoshi	过事
Han	汉
haodui	好队
Heyang	合阳
hongbai xishi	红白喜事
huamo	花馍
huan	换
Huanglong	黄龙
huangse huapian	黄色画片
hui	会

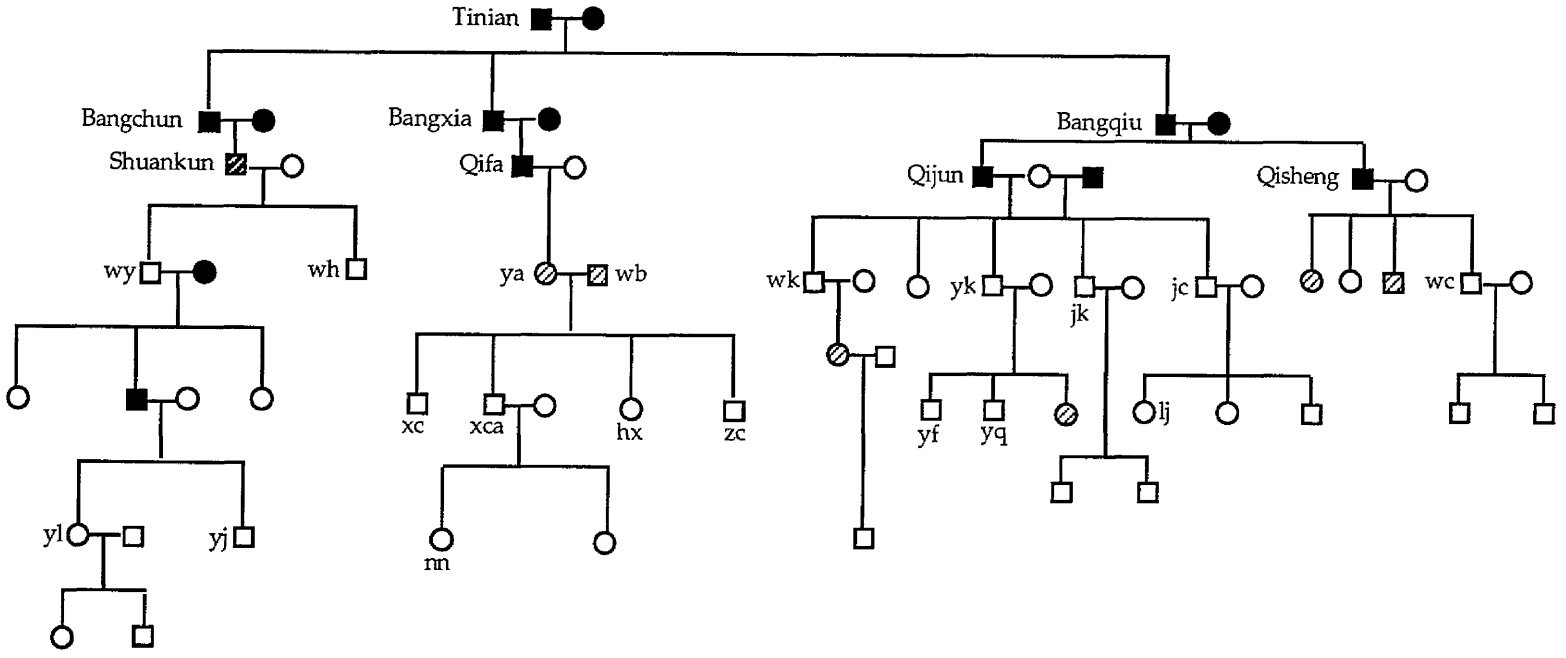
hundun	混沌
hunt(d)on	馄饨
huoke	货客
jia (chia)	家
jianjianmo	尖尖漠
jiao	轿
jiaozi	饺子
jiazu	家族
jie	姐
jiejie	姐姐
jieqi	节气
jieshaoren	介绍人
jin	斤
jin	近
jingji guanli	经济管理
jiushehui	旧社会
kanwu	看屋
kao	靠
kaotian chifan	靠天吃饭
kenghai	坑害
Laba	蜡八
lan	烂
landui	烂队
lao	老
laohumo	老虎馍
laoshi	老师
laoshi	老实
laoxiangren	老先人
Leijiawa	雷家洼
lengtouqing	愣头青
li	礼
li	里
li/wai	里－外
linjia	邻家
liwu/waiwu	里屋－外屋
Luohe	洛河
luohou	落后
mainuzi	卖女子
mairen	埋人
manchan sifen	瞒产私分
Mangp(b)a	忙罢
Mangqian	忙前
Mangzhong	芒种
mao	毛
maozi	茅子
meijin	没劲
meiren	媒人
menhe	门合
mo	馍

mu	亩
naoteng	闹腾
nengxing	能行
niang	娘
nu	女
nujia	女家
pinkuncun	贫困村
pinkunhu	贫困户
pochan	破产
Powu	破五
pozi	婆子
pusu	朴素
Qifeng	七峰
Qin	秦
Qincheng	秦城
Qinling	秦岭
Qinming	清明
qinqi	亲戚
Qinqiang	秦腔
qiqi	七七
qunzhong yijian	群众意见
ren	人
renjia xiaohua	人家笑话
renmingongshe	人民公社
renwu	任务
rizi	日子
ruan	软
Shaanxi	陕西
shangbian	上边
shangliang	上梁
shangou	山沟
shangwufan	晌午饭
shangwufan houshang	晌午饭后晌
shangwufan toushang	晌午饭头晌
shaohuo	烧火
shehui diaocha	社会调查
sheng	省
shenpozi	神婆子
shinianjiuhan	十年九旱
Shiwu	十五
shu	叔
shubei(bo) xiongdi	叔伯兄弟
shuidi	水地
shuiyandai	水烟袋
shuoxiale	说下了
sinaojin	死脑筋
sixiang	思想
songxifu	送媳妇
Tang	唐

tanhua	谈话
tao	掏
tiaojian	条件
tiliu	提留
tuyao	土窑
wa	娃
wanbadan	王八蛋
wanle	完了
Weihe	渭河
weiji	危机
weijia	魏家
weisheng	卫生
wenmang	文盲
wu	屋
wufu	五服
wuli/wuwai	屋里－屋外
Xi'an	西安
xia-ai-xing	狭隘性
xian	县
xiang	乡
xianjin	现今
xiao	小
xiaodui	小队
xiaozi	孝子
xie	邪
xifu	媳妇
xiha(e)	稀和
xinfang	新房
xingmenhe	行门合
xingzheng guanli	行政管理
xingzhengcun	行政村
xinke	新客
xipu moshi	系谱模式
xishi	喜事
xun	旬
ya	爷
Yanan	延安
yao	窑
yijianxiang	意见箱
ying	硬
yingqinde	迎亲的
yuan	远
yuanshang	塬上
yuanxia	塬下
yuanzi	院子
zeiwazi	贼娃子
zerenzhi	责任制
Zhao	赵
Zhaojiahe	赵家河

zhechile	这吃了
zhengmenhe	整门合
zhengshu	整数
zhibiaozhi	指标制
zhishi	执事
zhishibu	执事簿
zhongjianren	中间人
zhongren	中人
zhongyao renwu	重要任务
zhuanpianyi	赚便宜
zhuanyao	砖窑
zhuazidian	抓子弹
zhuwei	主位
zijiawu	自家屋
zirancun	自然村
zong	宗
zongzi	粽子
zongzu	宗族
zu	族
zu	组

Figure 10. Wanyou's Close
Zijiawu



□ male
○ female
■ ● dead
▨ ⊘ adopted

wy=wanyou, wh=wanhe, ya=yin'ai, wb=wanbin,wk=wankai
yk=yangkai, jk=jinkai, jc=jinchang, wc=wancheng; xc=xicang
xca=xincang, hx=hongxia, zc=zuncang, yf=yafeng, yq=yaqi,
lj=lijuan; yl=yali, yajun=yajun, nn=ningning

Appendix 2 Wanyou's close *zijiawu*

Wanyou's father's grandfather, Tinian (who was in the fifteenth generation according to the genealogy), had three sons - Bangchun, Bangxia and Bangqiu (how many daughters Tinian had was unknown). Bangchun had no son of his own and he adopted Shuankun. Bangxia had a son, Qifa. Bangqiu had two sons, Qijun and Qisheng. These four grandsons of Tinian were arranged according their age as four *shu-bei* brothers (see Figure 10). In Wanyou's generation (i.e. the eighteenth generation), there were eight male descendants, who were arranged according to their age as eight *shu-bei* brothers (i.e. close *zijiawu*). Wanyou, who was fifty nine in 1992, was the eldest among the eight brothers, while Wancheng, who was thirty three in 1992, was the youngest.

Wanyou's grandfather, Bangchun, did not have any son of his own and he adopted Wanyou's father from Qincheng. Wanyou's father, Shuankun, had two sons, Wanyou and Wanhe. Wanyou was married when he was seventeen and his wife came from a nearby village. Wanyou had two daughters and one son. Wanyou's son died of a heart attack in 1974. Both Wanyou's daughters had been married when I went to the village. One was married into Qincheng and the other was married within Zhaojiahe. Wanyou's second daughter was married to Dongbang (i.e. Group 2) and she was one of the few young people who were married within the village in the late 1970s. Wanyou saw himself as a pioneer who was brave enough to break the principle of village exogamy. Wanyou's elder daughter has a son and a daughter and Wanyou's younger daughter has two sons.

Wanyou's son had been married before he died and had two children, a daughter called Yali and a son called Yajun. Wanyou's son's wife's father was Wanyou's father's sister's son's cousin. After Wanyou's son died, Wanyou tried to keep his son's wife with him in Dawa to look after his son's children. In order to keep his daughter-in-law in Dawa, Wanyou managed to arrange another marriage for her. However, according to Wanyou, the husband he had found for his daughter-in-law was *wen-hua-di* (literally, 'a person with a low level of cultural quality'), and the couple always fought with each other. They beat each other as well as the children. Wanyou had to let them divorce. After this, Wanyou managed to arrange another marriage for his daughter-in-law. The third husband of Wanyou's daughter-in-law was a good person but he did not want to stay in Dawa. They soon left Dawa for the village from which the man came from. When Wanyou's daughter-in-law left, she tried to take her son Yajun (i.e. Wanyou's grandson) with her. According to Wanyou, he spent a large amount of money on Yajun in order to keep him - who was seen as a crucial link to continue the family - in Dawa. However, when I was in the village, Wanyou's grandson had already left Dawa for his uncle in a north-eastern city. Later, Wanyou tried to arrange an uxorilocal marriage for his granddaughter. Wanyou found a husband for his granddaughter within Zhaojiahe but he again failed to make the married-in husband stay in Dawa. After only one year of staying in Dawa,

the couple moved back to live with the boy's natal family in Nanjian. They had their first son in 1990.

Wanyou's brother, Wanhe, left the village in the fifties, when there was a great demand for people to join oil teams to work in the Xinjiang Autonomous District. As an oil worker, Wanhe travelled from one place to another and finally settled in Daqing in north-eastern China, which is famous for its oil production. Wanyou had visited his brother in Daqing twice and, the second time Wanyou visited his brother, he brought back a black and white television set from Daqing because his brother had bought a colour one.

Wanbin lived next door to Wanyou. Wanbin's mother was married into Zhaojiahe a long time ago, before 1949. She first married someone in Nanjian and after her first husband died, according to Wanyou, she started to commit adultery with a villager in Dawa who was the neighbour of Wanbin's father, Qifa. The neighbour of Wanbin's father also died, soon after Wanbin's mother had moved into his house. Then Wanbin's mother started - in Wanyou's word - to 'flirt' *(gou-yin)* with Wanbin's father. She sold the belongings of her second man. She and Wanbin's father took all the money and ran away from the village. According to Wanyou, the *zijiawu* brothers and relatives of the neighbour of Qifa waited in the night, holding clubs and knives, and claimed that they would kill this woman since she had no right to distribute the family property (of her second man) which did not belong to her. The couple went to Jingyang, which was not far away from Luoyang, the second biggest city of the province. The couple were not married at that time. Wanbin's mother, though she had been with three different men, did not have children. After the couple arrived in Jingyang in the mid 1940s, they adopted a girl from a poor family. This girl was Yin'ai, who became Wanbin's wife later. It was only after the new marriage law of 1950 was launched that the couple dared to come back to the village. In order to stay in Dawa, the couple managed to arrange a marriage for Yin'ai. Wanbin was thus adopted from a village in Heyang County. According to Zhao villagers, Wanbin was adopted rather than married into Zhaojiahe. The difference between an uxorilocal marriage and an adoption is that an adopted son has the right to claim the family property.

Wanbin's father committed suicide in the late 1950s. The reason was that then party secretary, Yongsheng, told Wanbin's father that a forthcoming mass campaign would also deal with his adultery with Wanbin's mother. According to Wanbin's neighbours, Wanbin's father, Qifa, was an extremely timid person and was afraid of everything. So Wanbin's father went to a hill behind the village and dived into the valley.

Wanbin's family was prosperous. Xicang, the oldest son of the family went to university in 1984 in Nanjing. After graduation, he taught in the college where he had studied. A few years later, Xicang went to the People's University in Beijing to do his post-graduate study. The second son of the family, Xincang, was the only one who was still in the village. As Yin'ai once said to me, "Xincang could have gone to university too but he had to sacrifice for the family. In order to support the family, I did not let him go further. After his graduation from junior high school, I ask him to stay home to help the family". Xincang was married several years ago. His wife was called Zunxia, who came from Dangjiahe, a neighbouring village. The couple had two daughters. Wanbin's only daughter was a nurse and worked in a clinic in a

neighbouring township. She was married in May 1992. The youngest son of the family is Zuncang who went to university in Qingdao, Shangdong Province.

Bangqiu's elder son, Qijun, was married to Yangkai's mother but he disappeared after he had left the village in the 1940s. Some said that he was killed by the bandits. Qijun had a son, Wankai, and a daughter. After Qijun was dead, Yangkai's mother married another villager from Nanjian who was the biological father of Yangkai, Jinkai and Jinchang. However, after having three sons, he also died of a disease. Yangkai's father (i.e. his mother's second husband) had his own close *zijiawu* in the main village. Yangkai, Jinkai and Jinchang still maintained a good relationship with their father's close *zijiawu*. Yangkai, as the oldest brother of the three, had two sons and recently adopted a daughter from his wife's cousin. Both Yangkai's sons were in high school. Jinkai, who had two sons, used to work in a mine in north-eastern China and returned to the village in 1992. Jinchang was a high school teacher in the township and had two small daughters and a newly born son. Wankai, who worked as a bookshop manager in the town, had neither son nor daughter, and he adopted a daughter from his wife's sister. Wankai arranged an uxorilocal marriage for his adopted daughter.

Qisheng, that is, Wancheng's father, used to have a 'beautiful' *('ren cai hao')* wife. Many young people in the village liked her. This was before 1949. Before the family division, although some young villagers were interested in Qisheng's wife, they were not able to meet her because all the four brothers of Qisheng lived together. According to Wanyou, other men were not allowed to come into their courtyard. However, after the family division, Qisheng was less careful. Qisheng's wife had an affair with a villager who lived in Xinzhuang (i.e. Group 5). Qisheng's wife then tried to poison Qisheng, and the couple were divorced later. Several years later, Qisheng had another woman who came from Henan Province. They got married, but for a long time they did not have any child. So the couple adopted a daughter and a son. And then the couple had their own daughter. Soon, they also had their own son, Wancheng. Wancheng had two sons. Qisheng and his wife returned their adopted son to his family in Qincheng. Both the adopted daughter and their own daughter were married.

Appendix 3 The Formal representation of the funeral celebration

The following process of the death celebration was recounted by different Zhao villagers on different public occasions, which were either when Zhao villagers discussed funerals in groups or when I raised explicit questions about the funeral celebration. Although it may not be true to claim that everyone in Zhaojiahe would accept this general picture, it is fair to say that most Zhao villagers would agree with this process when talking in public. It is important to note that some procedures of a funeral cannot be seen because they take place inside a house. Some activities involved in a funeral are supposed to be performed only by its own family members and no observation is possible. Therefore, it is useful for us to have a look at what Zhao villagers said they would do at the funeral.

There are different kinds of death and the dead person may not be the most elder member of the family. However, to talk about death in normal situations, Zhao villagers refer to the death of their fathers, grandfathers, mothers, or grandmothers. In my discussion, I shall assume that the dead person is the eldest member of the family.

I) Pre-burial Preparations

i) Chuan-yi ('getting dressed up')

The first thing to do is to help the dead person to 'get dressed up'. This does not have to wait until the person is actually dead. It often takes place when the family considers that the person is going to die very soon. It is important for the dead person to get dressed properly, though he or she might have had very simple and awkward clothes when he or she was alive. Except for satin, there is no particular restriction on the choices of materials. Satin is not used for dressing up the dead, because it is called *duan-zi,* which sounds exactly the same as 'no sons' in Chinese. Some said that silk, *chou-zi,* was preferred, since, in pronunciation, it sounds like 'having lots of sons'.

What is important is the number of pieces of clothes that the dead person should wear. This number has to be an odd number. That is, either three, five, or seven pieces. How many pieces of clothes that the dead person receives depends on his or her family's economic condition but they cannot be less than three pieces. The three pieces of clothes can be any kind, such as shirt, jacket, or coat. The importance is that the number of pieces of clothes must not be even, for instance four or six, because, according to Zhao villagers, even numbers will block the route that the dead person would have to pass. In this situation, even numbers are called 'blockage' numbers *(si-liu-bu-tong).* This rule also applies to the buttons on the dress prepared for the dead, which means that the number of buttons on the dead person's clothes also has to be three, five or seven.

'To dress up' must be done in a 'normal' way as if the dead person is still alive, but all the buttons have to be left unbuttoned. No explanation was given for this custom. A pair of new shoes is also needed and the dead person's face should be covered with a white handkerchief,

which may be printed with blue stripes but must not be left any trace of red. There are also two other things that need to be done. Firstly, the dead person's face and feet need to be washed. Secondly, if the dead person is a male, he will need to have a haircut; while, in the case of a woman, she will have her hair combed carefully. However, there should be no make-up for either sex. After all these preparations are finished, a red rope will be used to tie the dead person's feet together; this is called the 'death sentence rope' *(panjuesheng).*

The last thing to do at this stage is to put a coin into the dead person's mouth. This is called *kou-han-qian* (literally, 'money in the mouth'). During the pre-communist period, the 'bronze coin' *(tong-qian)* was often used for this purpose. In the dead person's pocket, there should also be some money wrapped in red paper; the amount of money should be counted according to the age of the dead person. For instance, if a person was seventy when he or she died, he or she would have had either seventy *fen* (i.e. pence or cents) or seventy *yuan* in his or her pocket. The dead person will also be accompanied by two pieces of steamed bread and one pair of chop sticks, which, wrapped in a brand new handkerchief, will be left in his sleeves.

ii) Xia-pei ('getting off the bed')

To remove the dead person from the bed to the mourning hall *(ling-tang)* must be witnessed by the dead person's *zijiawu* and relatives. Close *zijiawu* and important relatives are invited at this stage. In particular, if the dead person is a female, relatives from her mother's side must be present at this stage; while, if it is a male, his close *zijiawu* must attend the ceremony. It is important to note that 'to dress up' is considered to be the responsibility of a family but 'to remove the body' must be witnessed by the members of larger kin groups.

The body cannot be removed until the close *zijiawu* or relatives of the dead person arrive. A basin is used for burning 'paper money', which is called *zhi-qian.* Zhao villagers simply say 'to burn paper' *(shao-zhi).* Burning paper is a routine activity during the whole period of the funeral celebration, but there is a difference between the first burning and later ones. The first burning of paper - before the dead person is removed from the bed - is prepared only for the dead person and the 'paper money' will be used exclusively by the dead person for paying his way to his new destiny. After this burning, a series of paper burnings will not be prepared exclusively for the dead person; instead, the later burnings are for both the dead person and all others who have died before him. The ashes of the first burning - wrapped in a red piece of cloth - have to be kept for the dead person in his own hand, which will be carried by the dead person to his grave.

As soon as paper is burned, all the close *zijiawu* and relatives will start to wail, which is called *jiao-ku. Jiao* is 'to shout' or 'scream' and *ku* is 'to cry'. There is a musical rhythm in the wailing tones, which is distinctively identifiable with the death celebration. In order to remove the dead person from the bed to the mourning hall, a plank is often used for carrying the corpse. The body of the dead person should not be allowed to touch the plank directly, so there is often a layer of millet straw on it. All *xiaozi,* that is, the dead person's sons, grandsons, his brothers' sons, will kneel in front of the bed and kow-tow, (i.e. 'to knock one's head on the floor') before the removal.

iii) Ling-tang ('the mourning hall')

The body of the dead person is carried to a mourning hall which has been temporarily set up somewhere inside a room or a *yao*. The most common way of setting up a mourning hall is to place it in the back of a *yao*. In a sense, the dead person is not supposed to be separated from those who are still alive. A white curtain is often used to demarcate one third of the inner part of a *yao* into a mourning area. Behind the curtain, the plank is posited for the dead person to lie on, with his face upward. In front of the curtain, there is usually a small table with a white cover, which is prepared as the mourning altar. As soon as the table is set up, the second burning of paper will take place in front of the table. A basin for paper burning will be left there until the whole celebration is finished. After the dead person is moved into the mourning hall, it is necessary to burn some paper every time the members of the family have their meals.

As soon as the body is removed from the bed, someone must immediately go to the kitchen and cook four bowls of noodles for the dead person. The noodles have to be in wide stripes, which is called *da-qiao-mian*, (i.e. 'bridge-building noodles'). The noodles are meant to be used to help the dead 'travel' to his new place smoothly. The noodles have to be prepared - as if they are to be eaten normally - with salt, hot peppers and vegetable oil. However, before the noodles are divided into four bowls, a lump of clay will be put into each bowl, and a piece of paper will be used to cover the clay. The noodles will be laid on top of the clay, which makes the look of noodles appear to be full. According to Zhao villagers, this is made to avoid wasting too much noodles. The soup - which is used for cooking the noodles - will be preserved in a jar separately. Both the noodles and the soup should not be eaten and will be kept until the burial.

During the mourning period, every time a meal is served, there should also be four pieces of steamed bread and some dishes served on the mourning table for the dead person. In other words, the dead person is served whenever the living are having their food. However, the food served for the dead every meal will be consumed by the members of the family later. The food once served on the mourning table must not be brought back to the kitchen. During the mourning period, which lasts several days, paper is burned every night. *Zijiawu* brothers, relatives, friends and neighbours will visit the mourning hall at their convenience. Women will wail in front of the mourning table.

iv) Kan feng-shui ('geomancy')

It is a necessary step to invite a geomancer to come around to decide the date and time of the funeral and the place and location of the grave. In the most common cases, a funeral will take place within three or four days of the death. According to Zhao villagers, the dead is scared of thunders. So if a death happens in summer, the mourning period tends to be shorter than in winter, for most thunder storms occur in summer. However, the shortest mourning period would be no less than two days after a death. A geomancer will look for a proper place for the grave and his main task is to check the direction and depth of the grave.

An important task that a geomancer has to play is to tell whether the dead person is *chu-niang* or *dai-niang*. Zhao villagers could not tell how to write these two words. They could only explain what was supposed to be done according to these two phrases. In the case of *dainiang*, a cock is supposed to be put on the front top of the coffin after the dead person is placed in at the funeral. The cock will run away as soon as the coffin is carried towards the grave. This is *dainiang*. It does not matter whose cock it is. If the dead person's family does not have a cock, they can always borrow one from their neighbours. In the case of *chuniang*, it is slightly more complicated. The geomancer will have to decide a day after the funeral to conduct a performance in the *yuanzi* ('courtyard') of the dead person. The day as well as the exact hour of the day have to be decided by the geomancer. All rooms at this hour of the day will have to be cleared out, leaving all windows and doors open. Food in rooms should be covered in order to avoid it being eaten by the dead person. Nobody is allowed to come into the courtyard. Some firecrackers will be thrown into the yard, over the wall, from a neighbour's courtyard towards the end of the performance. This is *chuniang*, which lasts about one to two hours.

v) Diao-yan ('condolence')

Close *zijiawu* and important relatives, such as daughters or one's sisters' sons or daughters, will come to the mourning hall to condole with the family on the death. Wailing signifies the condolence. A male, for instance, a son-in-law, cries for only a very short while and then he will be taken away from the mourning table by others. Women cry much longer than men do but, finally, they will also be taken away by others. One is not supposed to stop wailing by oneself. He or she has to stay in front of the mourning table crying until he or she is dragged away by others.

vi) Other preparations before the burial

There are a few other things which need to be done before the funeral. Firstly, all relatives have to be informed in person. Zhao villagers either go by bicycle or on foot to inform their relatives in the neighbouring area. This must be done within a time limit as well as in a required order. Otherwise, relatives will feel offended. Secondly, a group of funeral operators/helpers need to be invited, mainly including four categories: 'conductors', chefs, assistants, and sedan chair carriers. One or two 'conductors' *(zhishi* or *xiang-hong)* are required at a very early stage. They are responsible for all planning and arrangement concerning the funeral. The 'conductors' cannot be one's own close *zijiawu;* instead, they have to be neighbours or friends who are not supposed to perform certain roles during the funeral, because one's own close *zijiawu* have to join the celebration and are not allowed to do other things apart from performing certain roles assigned to them. Those who are invited to be 'conductors' are often influential persons in the village. A number of chefs also need to be invited, and they are usually males. The number of chefs needed depends on the scale of a funeral. It can range from two or three to seven or eight. The assistants are those who are in charge of receiving gifts. This is one of the most important performances of a funeral. Ten, or even more, young and strong

villagers are needed for the task of carrying the sedan chair - in which the coffin is placed - to the grave. Thirdly, to prepare for the funeral feast, the family has to borrow many pieces of bowls and other dining and kitchen utensils from neighbours and friends. Fourthly, a temporary dining hall has to be installed in the courtyard, which includes setting up several huge square tables and, sometimes, a plastic roof to cover the yard. Fifthly, a group of local musicians have to be invited. A group of musicians, consisting of six to ten people who play different kinds of musical instruments, will perform for the funeral. The musicians are always counted in groups. One can have either one group or two groups of musicians.

II) The Funeral Day

Funerals are supposed to take place in one's own courtyard, but receiving funeral gifts *(yingmenhe)* is always carried out outside, either in front of one's courtyard or in a public square.

vii) Ying-hun ('greeting the soul')

On the day of the funeral, the musicians will come early in the morning. As soon as they arrive, their first performance will be called upon. The musicians will travel, while playing, from the dead person's door to the grave. This is called by Zhao villagers *yin-hun* (literally, 'greeting the soul'). Some said that, If an old person died, the musicians would be greeting a child's soul. After coming back from the grave, the musicians will be fed and then seated at a prepared table outside the dead person's courtyard. All the instruments that the musicians play are traditional Chinese musical instruments, such as *suona* horn, gong, drum, flute, *etc.*

viii) San-xian-li ('paying tribute to the dead')

After 'greeting the soul', the main kitchen, the bread kitchen and tea kitchen will present their 'gifts' *(li)* to the dead person. Two dishes, one hot and one cold, four pieces of steamed bread, and two cups of tea have to be put on the mourning table.

ix) Ying-men-he ('receiving gifts')

Zhao villagers were not be able to specify the word *men-he.* It means the procedure of receiving gifts from those who have come to attend the funeral. *Yingmenhe* is one of the most important performances at a funeral, which often takes a long time and must be conducted in public. All the villagers will come to see how the gifts are received, while the musicians are playing loudly. It often starts at eight or nine o'clock in the morning and ends in the late afternoon. Sometimes, it even takes more than one day.

Before going into the courtyard to join the feast, relatives of the dead person have to present their gifts on a series of tables set up in front of the courtyard. During the entire period of receiving gifts, *xiaozi* of the dead person should kneel down in front of those tables and touch their heads on the floor. What kinds of gifts one should bring to a funeral depends on one's relationship with the dead person. However, the following is a typical list of 'menhe':

a) either a paper house or floral wreath or both; b) a pig head and a pig tail or a cloth pig with ten *yuan* stuck to each of its ears; c) some money wrapped in a piece of red paper, presented on the front table; d) a box of firecrackers; e) some candles, incense, and paper money; f) a quilt; g) a tea banquet; h) a wine banquet; i) some colourful steamed bread; j) some fried bread in the shape of rings.

Both the paper house and wreath are made of colourful paper and put in front of the first table. The pig, money, firecrackers, candles and other things are all presented on the front table. In the past, Zhao villagers used to present a dead pig's head for a funeral, but nowadays they often use a toy pig (made of cloth) instead. If it is a real pig head, there should also be the pig tail. After the presentation, the pig head will be cut into two halves, and one half will be taken away by the guest (who brings it) when he or she leaves. The firecrackers that the guests bring will be set off immediately after the exhibition. The incense and paper money will also be used for the celebration of the day. Home-made quilts received from close relatives will be hung on a prepared rope in front of the courtyard door. Daughters, granddaughters, nieces are all supposed to present a quilt. Apart from daughters, others' quilts are one *chi* in width, which matches the width of a coffin. The dead person's daughter has to present a quilt in double size, that is, two *chi* in width. There are also small pockets on the quilts brought by the daughters, in which several small pieces of steamed bread are placed. While the quilts are hanging over the rope, people can take these little pieces of bread out and taste them. Close relatives also have to present two banquets, that is, a tea banquet and a wine banquet. These two banquets should be prepared exactly in the way a formal banquet is supposed to be made. In a formal banquet, the first step is to serve tea, followed by wine and meat dishes and, finally, steamed bread. It is supposed to be done in the same order when one is presenting food for the funeral. Several boxes of cigarettes should also be presented together with the tea banquet.

During the whole process of receiving gifts, the *xiaozi* are supposed to kneel down in front of those tables and touch the ground with their heads every time someone's gifts are presented on the tables. Women will go to the mourning hall and stay there.

x) Chi-xi ('to eat the feast')

As soon as the first group of guests come, the feast will start and carry on.

xi) Cheng-fu ('dressing up in the mourning style')

After the feast, it is the time to dress up in the mourning style. Relevant people will go to the mourning hall to put on their mourning dresses. *Xiaozi*, that include sons, nephews, grandsons and great grandsons, will have to dress up in certain ways. One difference between the son and others is that the son is supposed to dress in *sixi*, that is - if it is possible to translate - 'four grades' and the others, *sanxi*, which means 'three grades'. However, as a matter of fact, this difference only shows on their hats, on which, for the sons, there should be four stripes; while, for the others, there are only three. Both the son and nephew are supposed

to have white stripes on their hats, but there is a slight difference in the colour of the stripes. For the grandson, the stripes are brimmed with yellow ribbons and, for the great grandson, the ribbons are red. All the *xiaozi* will be dressed in a similar way: a long white gown covering the body from shoulders to feet, with a long white tail hanging down from their hats. The feet are also covered with a white piece of cloth. There is also a face cover tied to their hats, dangling down to hide their faces. A thin linen rope has to be tied around their waists. Every *xiaozi* is supposed to carry a willow twig with him after he has dressed up. The twig must be wrapped in several places with two or three paper belts, which have to be white for the son and nephew, yellow for the grandson and red for the great grandson.

For women, there is no difference between daughters and sisters or other kinds of female close relatives in terms of the mourning dress. They are all dressed in white jackets and trousers. Other people, such as neighbours, friends or men from the dead person's wife's family, do not wear any particular mourning clothes; they only need to put on a black armband. After dressing up in the mourning style, all those who are in the mourning dresses will kneel down in front of the mourning table, waiting for another round of paper burning before the dead is removed.

xii) Ru-lian ('to place the body in the coffin')

One missing point needs to be mentioned here before going on to describe the following procedures. As we have already seen, daughters, sisters and those from the dead person's wife's side are required to present quilts to the dead, which are supposed to be used for covering the body in the coffin. For the *xiaozi*, there is a different requirement: they are asked to prepare cotton-padded mattresses, which are called in Chinese *ruzi*. In China, a complete set of bedding includes both *ruzi* and *beizi* (quilt). Each *xiaozi* has to present one *ruzi*, which is supposed to be piled up in front of the mourning table on the funeral day.

To remove the body of the dead person into the coffin, the first thing to do is to lay all the *ruzi* into the coffin in a proper order. The closer is one's relationship to the dead person, the later one's *ruzi* will be laid into the coffin - in order to keep this person's *ruzi* closer to the dead. According to this rule, the first few *ruzi* will be those from the dead person's nephews, then those from his great grandsons and grandsons, and finally those from his sons, who are closest to the dead. If there is more than one son or grandson, the younger one's is supposed to be placed in the coffin earlier than the elder one's. Ideally, the body of the dead person will be in touch with his eldest son's *ruzi*. The same rule also applies to the way in which the quilts are supposed to be piled on top of the body: the closer the relationship, the earlier the quilt. The first quilt on the body should be the dead person's wife's, if the dead person is a male. The second should be his mother's, and then followed by the dead person's daughters' and nieces'. When a woman is dead, the first quilt, which is the closest to the dead, will be one from her natal family.

Xiaozi will move the body into the coffin, which has often been prepared a long time before, when the dead person was still alive. Before the body is removed, the dead person's face should be washed for the last time. There is usually a 'pillow' in the coffin, which is often

just a piece of brick. If there are too many *ruzi* and quilts, some of them are supposed to be left on top of the coffin.

xiii) Chu-zhi ('placing the obituary')

As soon as the body is placed in the coffin, all the *xiaozi* will go to put an obituary notice in a public square, which is called *chuzhi*. *'Zhi'* is 'paper', which refers to the obituary paper; while *'chu'* literally means 'to go out', but here rather means 'to go out to present'. Leaving the coffin in the mourning hall with women, all the *xiaozi* will follow the musicians to 'go out to present' an obituary notice. The obituary notice, written by the geomancer several days ago, will be placed on the wall of a public square. The obituary notice includes the following contents: the name of the dead person, the time of his death, the direction and depth of his grave, and all the names of his *xiaozi*.

xiv) Po-zhi-peng ('breaking the paper burning basin')

A pottery basin has been used for burning paper for the dead person since his body was removed from the bed to the mourning hall, and all the ashes are supposed to be saved in this basin apart from the first burning. After the obituary trip is over, the same group of people will go on for another: to break the pottery basin. The eldest son of the dead person - if he has more than one son - has to carry the basin on top of his head, but he is not supposed to touch the basin. If the dead person is a male, a senior member from the dead person's wife's family will offer his hand to keep the basin from falling off the son's head; while, in the case of death of a female, it will be someone from her father's family helping hold the basin. The basin is supposed to be carried to the end of the village and broken there. It must be broken.

xv) Dian-jiao ('sacrificing to the sedan chair')

In order to carry the coffin to the grave, a sedan chair is used. It is made of steel and wood, with colourful pieces of cloth hanging down from the top. The sedan chair is often set up in front of the courtyard, which is also the place for receiving and displaying gifts. After the sedan chair is ready, an old man will be sent on the road for the purpose of sending some bread to the grave. This is called *daluji*, that is, 'to strike the road-bed'.

Now, it is time to move the coffin out of the mourning hall. All the women will follow the coffin to go out of the hall, while screaming and wailing. All the women are supposed to stay around the sedan chair, in which the coffin is placed; while, all the *xiaozi* are supposed to kneel down in front of it. This is called *dianjiao*, that is, 'to sacrifice to the chair'. All the males take turns to touch the ground with their heads and then they will be served with wines. Everyone drinks three cups of wine. The same amount of drinks will be poured to the ground; this is supposed to be an offering to the dead.

After this, the musicians will be asked to perform three pieces of music. The firecrackers are then set off. Some other preparations are also in process, which are mainly concerned with the things that need to be brought together with the sedan chair to the grave. These things include a sedan-chair-jar, containing the dead person's personal belongings; a

soup-jar, containing the noodle-soup that was made when the dead person was transported from the bed to the mourning hall; the four bowls of noodles on the mourning table; a lantern; and a fire basin.

xvi) Marching to the grave

Music will be played wildly before the sedan chair is to be moved. The sons of the dead person will go first, and then the sedan chair follows. The women follow the sedan chair, wailing. The musicians always walk just in front of the sedan chair, performing while walking. The grave is often in one's own 'responsibility land' and often not very far from the village.

xvii) Mai-ren ('the burial')

It requires complicated techniques to bury because the shape of the grave is peculiar. A grave consists of two parts, an opening pit and a *yao*. The opening pit is vertically dug into the earth in the exact width and length of a coffin. The depth of this pit is often more then a decametre. The main part of a grave is its *yao*. At one end of the pit, which has to be chosen by the geomancer, there will be a very small opening looking like a *yao* face, which leads to a huge grave inside. The opening is just big enough for the coffin to be moved in, but inside the grave-*yao*, there will be space for everything, such as all the remaining mattresses and quilts.

Two thick ropes are used to lower the coffin slowly to the bottom of the pit, and then two young people will slide down onto the top of the coffin and move it bit by bit into the grave-*yao*. After the coffin is moved in, the first thing to do is to open the coffin - which is not nailed - in order to remove the handkerchief from the dead person's face and to tear off the neck button of the dead person's upper dress. The reason given for tearing off the neck button was that the new born children of the family would be dumb if it was buttoned. The steamed bread and chopsticks in the dead person's sleeves, which were placed in when the dead got dressed up, have to be taken out now. The chopsticks have to be broken and thrown over to the ground. All the other things that are supposed to go with the dead person need to be passed down to the grave. The sedan-chair-jar has to be placed to the left of the coffin, and the lantern - which needs to be lighted - should be placed to the right of the coffin. The fire-basin is supposed to be burned within the *yao* in order to keep the dead person warm. An obituary board, which is often made of bricks, is also left inside the grave. After all of this is done, the door of the *yao* will be blocked by bricks. And then the burial starts. Half way through the burial, the four bowls of noodles and the noodle-soup are supposed to be thrown into the grave, and buried.

The final performance at the grave is the burning of paper, including those paper houses and wreaths. Music is played loudly again, and all the women start to wail when the burning begins. On the way back to the village, the musicians will still perform and the women are still supposed to wail. In the evening, the musicians will perform for the dead and a banquet will be served for those who have helped.

III) Post-burial Activities

xviii) Shao-gu-cao ('burning the millet straw')

When the dead person is transferred from the bed to the mourning hall, he is supposed to lie on a blank, on which there will be some millet straw. The millet straw must be burned within three days after the funeral, and it has to be burned in the night by one person. If two people go for this work, they must not talk to each other, for they might scare the ghost of the dead. The first one-third of the straw is supposed to be burned at the first turning of the road near the grave in the night of the funeral. The second one third should be burned somewhere between the grave and the village the following night. The last one third needs to be burned at a turning of the road near the village in the third night after the funeral.

xx) Shao-qi-qi ('burning *Qiqi'*)

Qi is a Chinese character for number seven. After the funeral, paper is supposed to be burned seven times, at intervals of seven days; this is called 'burning *qiqi*' in the village. If the dead person stayed in the mourning hall for three days, paper should also be burned once a day for three days after the funeral. On the third day after the funeral, people should get up very early and prepare a bowl of noodles for the dead person and send a brave person to the grave before dawn, who should carry the noodles, a bottle of wine, a box of firecrackers, and some incenses and candles. The person is supposed to go to the grave to light the candle and incense, fire the crackers, and sacrifice the noodles and the wine to the 'earth god' *(tushen)*, that is, to thank the god. After the firecrackers go off, the *xiaozi* and others are supposed to visit the grave with corn, millet, sorghum, buckwheat, and rapeseed, which, according to Zhao villagers, signify a prosperous posterity. A child under seven must be brought to the grave with a piece of tile in his hand as a mirror, for it is said that little children under seven could - with the help of a piece of tile - see what the dead person is doing in the grave.

To burn paper always means going to the grave, and people will dress in white, though not as formally as what they do for the funeral. Men may not wear their gowns any more but they wear a white hat, while women are always completely in white. After the third day of burning, there is a break for three days. The first seventh day after the funeral, paper has to be burned again. Close *zijiawu* and relatives will travel to the grave with a bottle of wine and some steamed bread. Afterwards, every seven days, paper is burned till the fiftieth day. Performances for paper burning are little different from each other except that, on the third and fifth 'seven day' burning, there will be guests from other villages. On the fiftieth day after the funeral, there will be an important performance in which guests join and, after this, the regular burning ends.

After *Qiqi*, there is a 'one hundred day' burning, and then one is supposed to burn paper for the dead person on the day of his burial for three years, apart from his birthday burning at home and the *Qingming* burning. *Qingming* is the time for every family to remember the dead, which means that paper is not burned for any one in particular but for all dead people.

xxi) Huan-fu ('changing the mourning dress to the normal')

The third year's burning signifies the completion of a funeral celebration. Close *zijiawu* and relatives will be invited to a banquet after the third year's burning, to change their mourning dresses. White clothes are replaced by red and other colourful ones, which is called *huanfu* in the village. After this, a funeral celebration is completed.

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